

SERMONS

ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS,

Preach'd in the

ROYAL-CHAPEL

At St. JAMES's,

By ANDREW TREBECK, M. A.



LONDON;

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Perfect
J. H.



T H E
C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N I.

*Preach'd before the QUEEN at St. James's,
April 30, 1710.*

THE Efficacy of Religion to procure
Peace with our Enemies.

PROV. xvi. ver. 7.

*When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh
even his Enemies to be at Peace with him.*

S E R M O N II.

The Prosperity of the wicked, and Sufferings of the righteous, no Imputation to the Wisdom, Justice, or Goodness of Providence.

PSAL. xix. ver. 137. 1711.

*Righteous art thou O Lord, and upright are thy
thy judgments.*

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PROV. i. ver. 32. lat. Part. 1709.

The Prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

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The Design of temporal Judgments, not
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LUKE xii. ver. 1, 2, 3. 1709.

*Thee were present at that season some that told
Jesus of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate
had mingled with their sacrifices: Jesus an-
swering, said unto them; suppose ye that
these Galileans were sinners above all the Gali-
leans, because they suffered such things; I tell
you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all
likewise perish.*

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*surrection of life, and they that have done
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S E R M O N IX.

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pany.*

PSAL.

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PSAL. xvi. ver. 3. 1712.

To the Saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight : or as in the other Version, All my delight is upon the Saints that are in the earth, and upon such as excel in virtue.

S E R M O N XII.

The Danger and Mischief of evil Society,
and the Conduct of our selves with relation to bad Company.

I COR. xv. ver. 33.

Evil communications corrupt good manners,

ERRA.

ERRATA.

PAge 48. for demonstrable *read* demonstrative. P. 139. for merits *read* demerits. P. 194. for afflictions *read* affections. P. 221. for that they *read* they that. P. 190 for dispensations *read* dispensation. P. 308. for bare *read* base. P. 347. for ver. 13, *read* ver. 33.

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S E R M O N I.

Preach'd before the

Q U E E N

At St. *J A M E S*'s

April 30th 1710.

Prov. 16. ver. 7.

*When a Man's ways please the
Lord he maketh even his Ene-
mies to be at Peace with him.*



AS Peace with God, the
World, and our own
Consciences is really the
most excellent and de-
sirable Blessing that Heaven can
bestow, or Man enjoy: so there is
nothing tends more to procure and

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pro-

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promote this than the sincere love and practice of Piety and Holiness. For whatever the Ignorance of some, or designed Malice of others, may invidiously suggest, Religion requires no insuperable difficulties, nor unreasonable impositions, but *her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.* Nay God in Mercy to us, and to prevent all shadows of excuse or complaint, hath so ordered the nature and course of things, that our Interest and Duty are both the same; by promoting the one we advance the other, and our Piety and Happiness increase, or abate together.

As 'tis our Saviour's rule, *Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and all outward things shall be added unto you;* so let us faithfully serve God, and secure Peace within, and we need not fear any Power, or Policy from without. We shall by happy experience prove what the
inspi-

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inspired Writer in my Text expressly asserts, that *when a Man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his Enemies to be at Peace with him.*

From which words I shall in the following Discourse recommend and enforce the discharge of this Duty on our parts, so as effectually to entitle us to the Promises on God's.

In order to which I shall not mispend time in any tedious or unnecessary Explanation of the Words. But shall,

First, Distinctly shew how we ought to behave our selves through the whole course of our Lives, that we may justly deserve the Character in my Text, of *making our ways please the Lord.* And then,

Secondly, Shall reflect on the many happy and advantageous Consequences of so religious a Behaviour.

First then, I am to shew how we ought to behave our selves through the whole course of our Lives, that

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we may justly deserve the Character in my Text, of *making our ways please the Lord.*

Now to make us complete Christians, and render our Obedience as acceptable as human Nature assisted with divine Grace is capable of, we must shew a sincere, impartial, and persevering conformity to the divine Laws.

First then, in order to please God we must with all sincerity of Heart conform to his Laws.

This indeed is a Principle so essentially necessary, that without it *all our Sacrifices are an Abomination unto the Lord.* For we may outwardly grieve, give Alms, and pray; and yet, if this be wanting, our Sorrow is but Hypocrisy, our Charity Design, and our very *Prayers are turned into Sin.*

God neither desires nor delights in formal Oblations; 'tis *the Heart* he requires and values, nor can the
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outward Act bear the least competition with the inward Design. We may by a specious and dissembled Piety impose upon the World, nay and by repeated habits come at last even to deceive our own selves; but we cannot thus delude and abuse him, *to whom all Hearts are open, with whom the darkness is no darkness at all, but the night is as clear as the day, yea the darkness and light are both alike.* Whatever outward Homage and Shew the Gods of the Heathen, who are only the work of Mens hands, might be contented with, yet the holy Psalmist was sensible that the true God, *the great Searcher of Hearts, required Truth in the inward parts;* and therefore says he, *if I regard Iniquity in my Heart the Lord will not bear me.*

As none are more justly detested by Men than Flatterers and Hypocrites when their artful Wiles are discovered; so none are more abominable

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minable to God, who always discerns them. For 'tis ill trifling in such sacred concerns, and counterfeiting with one, who is too jealous of his Honour to suffer such flagrant and daring Impieties to escape unpunished.

In vain do we think to please God by *honouring him with our Lips*, when our *Hearts are far from him*; in vain do we take his Covenant in our *Mouths*, when we *hate to be reformed*. Tho' *Simon Magus* believed, and was baptized by *Philip*, tho' he was his constant Companion, and seemed a forward Professor of Christ and his Doctrine; yet because *his Heart was not right in the sight of God*, he was not fit to receive nor confer the Holy Ghost, *he had no part or lot in this matter*, nay he was still in the very *Gall of Bitterness, and Bond of Iniquity*. Whatever pretences Men may make of Piety and Religion, however outwardly they seem affected

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to, and *contend earnestly for the Faith*, yet 'tis neither the warmth nor forwardness of their Zeal, but the sincerity of their Hearts, their good Inclinations and Principles that must please God.

As 'tis our highest concern, so it ought to be our principal care that *our Hearts should not reproach us so long as we live*. Tho' a good intention will by no means excuse any irregular action; yet even the best deeds we can perform are unavailable without it. For this is the very Spring that gives Life and Motion, and like the Soul in the Body quickens, animates and invigorates the whole.

'Tis a general and, I fear, too just a Complaint and Charge against many, that they are apt to cloud the Glory, and forfeit the Reward even of the most exemplary Virtues, by proposing popular Views, and false Interests of their own. Reli-

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gion is the pretence, and indeed ought to be their principal and ultimate end ; but Ambition, Covetousness, Humour, Party, Convenience, or Pleasure over-rule in their Hearts, and bear the chiefeſt ſway.

It muſt be confeſſed that as there is a mixture of Fleſh and Blood ; ſo is there of Corruption and Grace in the very beſt of Chriſtians. The Temptations we meet with from within, and Oppoſitions from without are numerous and powerful ; but none more eaſily or more dangerously beſet us than thoſe under the Garb and Sanctuary of Religion. When we adorn our Profeſſion by many excellent Graces, and *are Examples to others in Faith, in Converſation, in Charity, and Purity*, tho' hereby we intend more to ſerve ourſelves and become popular in the World, than to pleaſe God ; as we are then moſt likely to deceive
others,

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others, so we may too fatally delude our own Souls. For we may fondly imagine the bare Practice of such Duties to be effectual to Salvation, when 'tis really the End only and Intention that can sanctifie those means, and *render them a Saviour of Life unto Life*, which would otherwise prove *a Saviour of Death unto Death*.

I mention this to prove that there are Temptations and Snares in the very Acts of Religion; I urge it to warn you from indulging any base Mixtures, from gratifying any Passions or Interests of your own superiour to, or inconsistent with your Duty; nay I farther press it to shew how great pity it is that they who are adorned with such glorious Accomplishments, and are in all other respects *so near the Kingdom of Heaven*, should yet for want of this so necessary good End and Principle be entirely excluded.

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For this is the Foundation whereon we must depend, and this Sincerity of our Hearts, this Testimony of our Consciences, that whatever we do we do out of a Principle of Duty, and for the divine Glory is the most effectual, nay the only sure way and means to please God.

But farther. To this upright and sincere, we must add, secondly, an impartial and universal Conformity to the divine Laws. For as every *Sin is a Transgression of the Law*, and the Habit of any one is destructive to our Souls: so we must abhor every Vice, and have an uniform *Respect unto all God's Commandments* to please him: Tho' the Assertion of St. James may seem, to some, a very hard Saying, *whosoever offends in one point is guilty of all*: Yet we shall be better reconciled to the Reasonableness hereof, when we consider and reflect that the same Authority which

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which enjoined every single Duty established the whole; and that any one wilful and deliberate Sin excludes that sincere Love and Fear of God, which is the very Life and Soul of all Religion. Those false and deceitful Methods Men take of comprimizing for Sin, and compounding by the Performance of one Duty for the Violation of another, highly provoke God, and endanger their Souls: For the Psalmist assures us that he is a God *who has no Pleasure in Wickedness*; and we know that any one single Vice, if indulged and cherished, may produce a Legion.

Men are too apt to flatter themselves by unequal Comparisons, and conclude their Sins to be venial, because there are some that are more *exceeding sinful*. Thus the Pharisee overlooks his Censoriousness and Pride, and congratulates his happy State, because not conscious of the
Guilt

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Guilt of Adultery or Extortion.

'Tis wonderful to observe how very partially Men judge in favour of those Vices which, either through Complexion, Convenience, or Custom they are most addicted to. Thus the covetous Man detests all Luxury and Intemperance, often rails at, sometimes pities those who are guilty of such Crimes; but always excuses his own Avarice under those plausible Names of Frugality and good Husbandry. The Prodigal pleads a generous and hospitable Spirit, that the good things of this Life were designed and bestowed for Convenience and Pleasure; and therefore concludes his Condition to be much happier and safer than the *Covetous, whom both God and the World abhor.*

'Twere easy to expatiate on this Head, and shew with what weak Grounds Men delude themselves, and insult over others by such deceitful

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ceitful Varnishes; that there is scarce any Vice, however heinous in its Nature, or dangerous in its Consequence, that may not plead in its Excuse either Profit or Pleasure, or be compared with some other, which is as bad, or worse. But tho' such fallacious Shifts may gratify Mens Wills, or perhaps quiet their Consciences, yet God is no such Respector of Vices as to excuse or pardon any upon such slight Pretences, nor indeed on any other score than a sincere Repentance. For the *divine Wrath is revealed from Heaven against all Unrighteousness*; and St. Paul expressly declares, not only of Idolatry, Murder, and Adultery, but of *Hatred, Variance, Envyings, Revellings, and such like, that they who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

If therefore we sincerely endeavour to please God we must not indulge any unlawful Reserve, but
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lay the Ax to the Root even of our most beloved Lusts. We must carefully decline every Sin, and conform to every Duty; nay we must strive to *perfect Holiness in the Fear of God*; and in all our Actions and Designs, endeavour and aim to become *Israelites indeed in whom is no Guile*.

But to this sincere and impartial, we must add, thirdly, a constant and persevering Conformity to the divine Laws. This indeed is the Test and Trial of the whole; nor can there be a surer way to judge of the Sincerity and Integrity than by the Firmness and Constancy of our Obedience. For if *our Hearts are right and whole with the Lord* we shall, according to the holy Psalmist, *continue stedfast in his Covenant*. But if we fail in these we shall be continually subject to Slips and Starts, and, like the *Children of Ephraim*, *turn our selves back in the Day of Battle*. Holy David, by happy Experience,

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perience, found that 'twas good for him to hold fast by God and therefore apply'd his whole heart to fulfil the divine Statutes alway even unto the end.

They who believe and act upon sound Principles are as fixed as a Rock, and tho' the Waves beat, and the Storms roar, yet shall they not prevail. Neither the Terrors nor Flatteries of the World can make them shrink from their Duty, but *they will continue stedfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.*

Indeed there is nothing so justly lamented by all good Men, so exposed by the ill Nature and Malice of our Enemies, and which gives so much occasion to atheistical Wits to ridicule all Religion, as that scandalous Looseness and Unsteadiness of too many in their Opinions and Practices. When Men indulge themselves that Liberty only to profess and act as Convenience shall serve.

When

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When they can seem Zealots and Saints at one while, and Hypocrites and Libertines at another, however plausibly they may excuse themselves, yet have really no Title to Christianity or Morality, but are a great Scandal to both. Constancy (as in Friendship) so in Religion, is essentially necessary; since hereby only we shall please and be accepted with him *who is subject to no Variableness nor Shadow of Turning.* And if ye *continue in my Word*, then (as our Saviour declares) *are ye my Disciples indeed.* What will it avail to *begin a good Work*, unless we go on to *perform it unto the day of the Lord?* What will it profit *that we hear the Word with Joy*, if we have no Root in our selves, nor bring forth Fruit unto perfection? 'Tis the constant Habit of Goodness, not a few scattered Acts or sudden Raptures of Piety, that must please God. When we are religious only by Fits and Starts; when
our

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our Righteousness, like the morning Cloud or early Dew, soon passes away, we seem rather to be moved by Humour and Fancy than a true Sense of Duty, and seek more to please our selves than to serve God. 'Tis the *double minded Man who is unstable in all his ways*, who sins, repents, and sins again. 'Tis they who take up their Religion upon Fancy, Trust, Interest, or the like, that must change their Persuasions as these Principles vary; but the Man of a sound Faith and exemplary Life adheres stedfastly to his Duty, and lives and dies in its Defence and Practice. He is sensible that time cannot alter the Nature and Essence of things, but what deserves our Zeal and Affection once requires it to the end. And therefore, after the Example of the Psalmist, *stedfastly purposes to keep God's righteous Judgments*; in imitation of holy Job, *will not remove his Integrity, nor suffer his Heart to reproach*

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proach him; nay resolves with St. Paul that neither Life, nor Death, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor things present, nor things to come shall ever separate him from the Love of God, and his Duty. These are the Methods whereby we must procure a saving Interest in, and Right and Title to God's Favour. By such a sincere, impartial, and persevering Conformity, as is here described, we shall so please the Lord, that he will make even our Enemies to be at peace with us.

Which leads me to the second General, namely, to reflect on the many happy and advantageous Consequences of so religious a Behaviour.

Let the Nature and Reasons of things, our own Experience, or the divine Revelation be impartially consulted, and we shall find that the most probable Method to procure Peace with Men is to order our
ways

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ways so as to please God : For the very *Work of Righteousness is Peace ; and the Effect of Righteousness, Quietness and Assurance for ever.* There is such a Tendency in the very Nature and Practice of Godliness to make those who are about us easie, and our selves happy, that we cannot but allow of its present, as well as future Advantages, its Rewards at hand no less than in reversion. 'Tis the very Genius and Design of Religion to soften Men's Natures, to civilize their Tempers, to render them in all Conditions and Circumstances both useful, and agreeable, and to make as it were even an Heaven upon Earth. Would Men square their Lives and be governed by the Measures of that religious Wisdom, which is gentle, peaceable, full of Mercy, and good Fruits, we should soon perceive an happy Change of Affairs, more Abundance of Peace, and less Enmity in the World. x The

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Expostulation of St. *James* was very seasonable and just, *whence come Wars and Fightings among you? come they not hence, even from your Lusts?* Whence come Factions in the State, and Schisms in the Church, but from the Perverseness, Pride, and Prejudices of some, the Passions, ill Designs, or Interests of others, and the too apparent Immoralities of the whole Community? Whereas Religion would be a means effectually to prevent, or, at least, abate or compose such unchristian Breaches. For it seasons Mens Minds with those excellent Graces, which have a natural Vertue, Efficacy, and Power to promote their own and the publick Peace.

— f x x x Were we to examine the whole Scheme of Moral and Christian Virtues, we might perceive and prove a peculiar Tendency in them all to make both our selves and others happy. The Duties we owe to God,
our

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our Neighbours, and our selves, are wisely adapted to our Interest and Happiness, and give us a present Foretaste, as well as future Security. For do not Humility and Modesty, Justice and Charity, Forbearance and Tenderneſs prevent at least the Hatred and Enmity, if not engage the good Will and Affections of all Men? Are not *Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Meekness, and Temperance* the genuine Fruits and Products of the Spirit, those distinguishing habits of a Christian, that silence base Calumny, and most effectually conduce to procure the good word and good will of every one? Nay the Experience of every Age and Nation confirms this, that the more strictly we conform to the Duties of Religion, the more agreeably and Advantageously we behave our selves, are more respected by, and beloved in the World. Hence the *favour of*

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God and favour of Man are frequently joined together in Scripture, and to be approved of by the latter, esteemed not only a probable but usual consequence of being acceptable to the former.

Indeed *to ascribe Glory to God on High* is certainly a most regular and effectual way to procure *Peace on Earth*, to be entitled to, and engage the *good Will of Men*. Thus Solomon exhorts his Son, *to obey God's Commandments*, and, as a consequent Reward, expressly declares, *that length of Days and peace shall they add to him*. Holy David, from his own Observation of Persons and things, advises all Men *to keep innocence, to take heed to the thing that is right, since 'tis that alone which must bring them peace at the last*. And, having enumerated sundry, great, and signal Advantages, concludes with this very expressive Rapture, *lo, thus shall the Man be blessed that feareth the Lord*.

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Lord. The principal cause of which happy Effect is not from any Art or Contrivance of our own, but from the over-ruling Hand of God, who disposes of Persons and things according to his Pleasure, and who has even the *Hearts of all Men in his Power as the Rivers of Waters turning them how or wheresoever he will.* 'Tis God that *maketh our Enemies to be at peace with us*, and therefore whatever Calamities may threaten us, whatever Dangers or Difficulties we may fear, none can molest or *harm us* when protected and secured under the *Shadow of his Wings.* We shall by happy Experience prove that 'tis much safer and *better to trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in our selves, or Man*

It may indeed be objected by some that there are those in the World, such as the Psalmist complains of, who, *when he laboured for peace*, were so morose and perverse as to *make themselves ready for Battle*; nay who

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were his most bitter and malicious Prosecutors, only because he was a *Follower of that which was good*; and therefore that such Monsters as these seem to thwart and confute the Maxim in my Text, and shew that Religion, instead of making us at peace with, even creates us Enemies. To this we must answer, that God may so order the course of things, that even the best of Men may have Enemies, and yet prevent all harm that they shall receive from them; he may send them as scourges to those, who, tho' they have sundry good Qualities, yet retain some bad ones, which need such Corrections; he may cause them to improve and profit by them; or he can at least even at any time turn their most implacable Hatred into Kindness and Friendship. For *the Lord is King, be the People never so impatient*; the raging *Waves of the Sea*, and that more violent *Madness* of
of

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of the People, are subdued and quelled at the Breath of his Mouth, and even the most hardned Enmity softened into Love.

'Twere easie, if necessary, to confirm this Truth by sundry instances and examples; but I shall content my self at present with that remarkable one of *Esau*, whose inveterate Malice and Revenge against his Brother was by the over-ruling Power of God converted into the most kind and rapturous Endearments. And if *Jacob's* single Piety prevailed so with God as to smooth the rough temper and passionate threats of *Esau* into Calmness and Love, what Peace, what Blessings might we not expect and hope from the sincere, constant, and uniform practice, as well as publick profession, of the best Religion? X

Were this our whole Nation disposed thus to order our steps, and regulate our ways so as to *please the*
Lord

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Lord, he would soon make our Enemies to be at peace with us. We might very safely and justly apply to our selves the Words of the Psalmist, happy are the people who are in such a case, yea blessed are the people, who have the Lord for their God. —

With what good grounds might we expect to behold that glorious Prophecy fulfilled in our days? They shall turn their Swords into Plowshares, and their Spears into Pruning-hooks, Nation shall not lift up Sword against Nation, neither shall they learn War any more, they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy Mountains. How soon might we then enjoy what, with so much Expence and Blood we have been long contending for, and which indeed all wise and good Men so greatly wish for, and want, Peace within our Walls, and Plenteousness within our Palaces? For 'tis generally true of all Nations since the Foundation of the World, that then they have

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have been most remarkable for their Greatness, when they have been so for their Virtues; *that when they sinned not they prospered, because the God that hateth Iniquity was with them.* Victory abroad and Plenty at home were the Trophies and Rewards of their singular Piety; according to the wise Man's Maxim *surely it shall be well with them that fear the Lord.*

How far and how justly, in comparison with other Nations, we may in these respects congratulate our own, may perhaps be a subject of too invidious a nature. The Faith we profess, as it stands distinguished by the Name of Protestant and is thoroughly purged as well from all idolatrous Corruptions in its Doctrines, as Preciseness or Indecencies in its Worship and Discipline, I have now neither time, nor, I hope, need to justify. I am persuaded all of you are sufficiently satisfied of the Excellency of our Religion, and
twere

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'twere happy indeed if we were as reformed in our Lives, as we are in our Doctrines. † We want neither Encouragement nor Example from the THRONE to make us a religious and happy People. We have wise Laws for the Security of our Government in Church and State, which, if as duely executed, as prudently designed, must render them both not only safe, but prosperous.

Let then none of us be wanting in our proper spheres and respective capacities, to advance the Honour, and promote the Welfare of these. More particularly it becomes those whom God hath honoured with the most eminent and advantageous Stations, to espouse the Interest of Religion by their Authority and Zeal, and adorn it with their pious and exemplary Lives. Such are in reason, ingenuity, gratitude, and duty engaged and obliged to excel in
Virtue.

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Virtue. They have all possible Motives to attempt and carry on, all Encouragements to succeed and prosper in their good Works. For Men are very easily and powerfully swayed by the Eminency of their Characters, and are either allured, or awed, or shamed into a Compliance. But let none of us, tho' in a meaner Capacity, excuse our selves, as if our single Virtues or Crimes would little avail to the good or detriment of the whole. Let us rather unanimously resolve, to the utmost of our power, to promote the Advancement of God's Glory, the Good of his Church, the Safety, Honour, and Welfare of our Sovereign and her Kingdoms, continuing firm to our Principles, steady in our Allegiance, and as true to her Interest as She is to ours. Then might we really feel, what now only we can wish for, the comfortable Fruits, the distinguishing Advantages of a truly

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truly blessed and united People.

And, O, that there *were such an Heart in us that we would fear God, and keep all his Commandments always, that it might be well with us, and with our Children for ever.* That both high and low, rich and poor would, in the words of our Collect, endeavour, and pray to eschew those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; *that being zealous for our Church, loyal to our Queen, and useful to one another, we might all of us enjoy abundance of Peace so long as the Sun and Moon shall endure.* Amen.





SERMON II.

Preach'd at the

ROYAL-CHAPEL

At St. JAMES'S 1711.

Psalm 119. ver. 137.

*Righteous art thou, O Lord, and
upright are thy Judgments.*



IN those times of Ignorance when the World lived by Sense, and were directed by the faint glimmerings of mere natural reason, things were judged and determined by

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by outward appearances, and Men were esteemed virtuous or vicious not according to their inward qualities, but their outward welfare or misery. Nay God at first indulged this notion in the Jews by promising temporal Rewards as the Crown and End of their Piety, and temporal Punishments as the chief Consequences of their Wickedness. Good and godly Men under the old Law were generally prosperous, lived comfortably, and died quietly; but when this began to decline, and draw towards a period, when *the Sun of Righteousness* approached and *Life and Immortality* were brought to *Light through the Gospel*, the Methods of Providence and the Notions of the World were much altered; then God trained up his dearest Children and Servants to Affliction and Sufferings, and taught them that *through much Tribulation they must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*. Then the
Prospe-

Prosperity of wicked Men was no strange thing but obvious in fact, and easily accounted for by reason, nor could wise or pious Men in the least envy those, who had *their good things in this life*, when endless misery and torment was to be their Portion in the next. Thus God imparted his discoveries according to the capacities of Men, and the age wherein they lived; so that, in fulness of time, and to enlightned Christians, every dispensation was clear and manifest, and very justly might we conclude, in the words of my Text, *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy Judgments.*

But since some Christians by name, tho' weak in faith, are yet puzzled and offended at the prosperous estate of the wicked, and sufferings of the righteous in this life; I shall endeavour, in my following discourse, to reconcile these to the Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness of God.

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As to the first of these, the temporal Prosperity of the wicked, the permission of this is every way consistent with the Wisdom of God. Were there always *one Event to the righteous and the wicked*, riches and plenteousness constantly accompanying the former, and poverty and misery infallibly consequent on the latter, the Wisdom of Providence in the manner of its dispensations, and management of its affairs, would not much be regarded. All our designs and endeavours then would be purely mercenary, and we should pursue Virtue, not as a matter of duty, or upon future prospects, but for its present rewards. We should be of the number of those, *who do indeed follow Christ, but only for the Loaves*, and without seeking or desiring an Inheritance to come should take up our rest in this world, and cry out with mistaken Peter *'tis good for us to be here.*

here. 'Tis therefore upon just and prudential grounds that things are otherwise ordered, and that wicked Men do here often prosper, and the righteous suffer.

That God should sometimes forbear with Sinners, and permit them to thrive and flourish in the World, is upon sundry accounts very reasonable and justifiable. For this Life is only a state of probation and tryal, not recompence and reward; and 'tis fit Sinners should have their time and use of those Talents, which, if they continue to abuse, will render them obnoxious to greater Damnation.

Besides not only in regard to themselves, but in respect to others, to good Men in particular, and to the whole World in general, the continuance and even prosperity of bad Men may be expedient and necessary. For such is the present posture of our affairs, so promiscuous

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are often the concerns, the relations, the interests both of bad and good Men, that the loss or diminution of the one must be a detriment to the other. Nay 'tis often in mercy to the righteous that the wicked are continued, and abound with plenty. The improvement of their secular and spiritual condition, the growth of their fortunes, and increase of their good graces may both proceed from them. As they may owe their arts to their invention, their industry to their encouragement, and their whole dependance to their bounty : so they may their virtues to their vices, the exercises of their meekness, patience, and constancy to their oppression, malice, and unrelenting cruelty. As gold and silver are tried in the furnace, and purged from all their dross: so they who have been frequently exposed to, and constantly resisted the snares and temptations of

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of the wicked are distinguished from Hypocrites, and judged upright Christians. When Religion is in fashion, Virtue our Pleasure, and Godliness our Gain, the attainment and pursuit are very cheap and easie; but when these cross our appetites, interests, or passions to persevere still in the practice, is an infallible argument of our sincerity, and proves our courage and constancy. So that the godly are in a great measure obliged to the wicked for the Security and Perfection of their Virtues; and 'tis an undoubted argument of the Wisdom of God to continue those, who serve to distinguish his faithful Servants, and without whom many Christian Graces were entirely lost.

Nay not only good Men in particular, but the whole Community of Christians may derive comfort and profit from the continuance and prosperity of wicked Men. Tho'

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these are generally the authors of mischief and disorder, yet God, who *can bring good out of evil* Instruments, may turn their ill designed and injurious Contrivances to his own Praise and Glory and the publick Welfare. Sundry instances there are of this both in sacred and prophane History ; but were there no other, yet the Redemption of Mankind by the Death and Passion of our Saviour Christ resulting from hence, proves not only the forbearance, but the power and authority of wicked Men to be beyond all dispute both profitable and necessary. For had not God permitted the arbitrary power of the *Romans*, and revengeful malice of the *Jews*, the former to condemn, the latter to crucifie this *Lord of Life and Glory*, we had wanted the greatest Blessing Mankind ever did or could possibly receive. How then can we justly blame the Wisdom of
Provi-

Providence in continuing those, who in event and consequence procured the greatest and most universal Benefit? How foolishly do we charge God with permitting treacherous, unrighteous, and merciless Men, without whom we might have been for ever miserable?

Having vindicated the divine Wisdom in forbearing with, and prospering the wicked in this world: Let us, in the next place, endeavour to reconcile these to the Justice of Providence. That God governs the World, and yet permits the wicked to live, to grow old, to become rich in goods, and mighty in power, has in every age been the complaint of some, an offence to others, and wonder even to all. The foolish and unwise have not only perversely considered, and misapplied this, but the most serious and skilful have been startled and confounded. *Jeremy, Job, Da-*

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vid, and *Habakuk* have severally argued with God, and tho' they never presumed to impeach the Equity and Impartiality of his providential dispensations, yet desired information and satisfaction in this point, *Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?* In answer to this we may safely affirm that the iniquities of Men do by no means pass unregarded, tho' they are at present unpunished, that, *as the hairs of our heads*, so the various transgressions of our lives shall be all number'd; but then the times and seasons of executing wrath and taking vengeance on these, God reserves to himself, and will not, to gratifie our curious fancies, much less inquisitive rudeness, invert or alter his own determined method; that sooner or later all things will be rightly adjusted, and all persons convinced, so that if we are content

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to tarry the Lord's leasure he will make his Righteousness as clear as the light, and his just Dealing as the noon day.

If we duly consider the true nature of vicious prosperity, as it implies much wealth to mispend, much power to oppress, and much time to abuse; if we ponder upon the vanity and emptiness of all earthly Satisfactions, how little they please, and how soon they cloy; if at last we reflect on the melancholy consequences of these things and the miserable end of such Men, we shall have very little reason to *fret our selves because of evil-doers, or to be envious at the workers of Iniquity.* Let the rich Glutton in the Gospel, be *cloathed in purple and fine linnen, and fare sumptuously every day;* let him carelessly overlook, or scornfully despise his distressed Brother, whilst some envy, and others murmur at such seemingly unequal and strange Proceedings; yet the Justice
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of God is sufficiently vindicated when he comes to pronounce, *Son, remember that thou in thy life time receivest thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

No wise or considering person would chuse to *gain the whole World at the loss of his own Soul*, or exchange the *Pleasures of Sin for a moment* for Miseries exquisite in degree and endless in duration. We must arrive to a great height of folly and madness to envy their state, who spend their days in plenty, and *in a moment descend into Hell*. Supposing wicked Men then to enjoy all the outward Prosperity their own Hearts could wish, or the whole World bestow, yet the Punishments they are exposed to in another Life are alone sufficient to vindicate the divine Justice, and silence all the Murmurs of unthinking Men. A rebellious *Pharaoh*, may here proudly in-

sult,

sult, who is the Lord that I should obey him? A vaunting Goliath with the Strength of his Body, or a lofty Senacherib with his numerous Forces defie the Armies of the living God; yet the day of the Lord cometh with wrath and fierce anger, when he will cause the Arrogancy of the proud to cease, and lay low the Haughtiness of the terrible. Forbearance then must give place to Vengeance, and they who have despised the riches of his Patience and Long-suffering shall to their great confusion feel the Severity of his Judgments. Then the mouth of all wickedness shall be stopped, the Glory of the divine Justice be conspicuously displayed to the punishment of evil doers, and the praise of them that do well.

Having reconciled the continuance and outward prosperity of wicked Men with the divine Wisdom and Justice, I shall now endeavour

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vour to prove them consistent with his Goodness.

Indeed, were Men always to do evil, and, as they increase in years, to increase in wickedness, 'twere an act of Mercy in God to cut them off in their infancy, or *the very midst of their days*, and not permit them to fill up the measure of their Iniquities : But when we consider that whilst there is life there is hopes, that tho, like the Prodigal in the Gospel, we *have wasted all in riotous living*, yet, while we enjoy the use of our reason and senses, there is room for Conversion; that invitations are daily made, and opportunities offered to make our Peace with God, and to save our Souls ; when we reflect that the end and design of this Forbearance of God, which some Men count Slackness, is that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance ; nay if we consider

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consider the examples of those who have been great Sinners, and yet great Penitents, as an adulterous *David*, an apostate *Peter*, and persecuting *Paul*, who were afterwards eminent Patterns of Zeal, Fidelity, and Chastity; we must acknowledge the Goodness and Loving-kindness of the Lord remarkably displayed in such delays of punishment, and should adore, instead of murmuring at, the exercise of that, to which we, and the whole Christian Church are indebted for such bright and glorious Ornaments.

That some wicked Men thrive and prosper in the world, enjoy Health, Pleasure, Plenty, and Power, may be rather an argument of, than reproach to God's Goodness; since by these abundant favours they may in gratitude be obliged to Duty and Obedience. For ingenuous minds are sooner won by favours, than Terrors, and
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more powerfully worked upon by Rewards, than Judgments ; and no proofs of tenderness can be justly complained of, which may be a means to enlighten Mens Minds and reform their Manners. A good Husbandman will try all experiments in the management of his Soil, *will bear long with, and dig about it*, and dung it, before he will condemn and pronounce *it barren*. And surely he, *who delights not in the death of a Sinner*, will not grudge or withhold any proper motives, or probable means to his Conversion, and Salvation. The Benignity of his Nature, and Riches of his Goodness rather incline and dispose him to all merciful methods, to leave no complaint, nor so much as pretence to Ungodliness.

Thus, having vindicated the Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness of Providence in the Prosperity of the wicked,

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I proceed, secondly, to reconcile these with the Sufferings of the righteous. That good and godly Men often fall into Afflictions, and suffer temporal Punishments, is a truth obvious in fact, and universally allowed of; that the permission of these is every way consistent with the Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness of Providence, tho' not so generally acknowledged, is yet what I shall endeavour to prove to be as infallibly certain.

Fools may ignorantly charge God with want of Policy and Discretion for permitting injured Virtue and afflicted Innocence, yet these no way interfere with or reproach, but rather glorifie his Wisdom. They serve to prove our Sincerity, to fortifie our Virtues, to exalt our Graces, and in short, if rightly managed, make us the wiser Men, and the better Christians.

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The Wisdom of God sent *Nim-*
rods into the World even in the ear-
 liest ages to discipline his Servants,
 timely to inure them to all passive
 Virtues; and the *Canaanites* and *Je-*
busites were politickly continued to
 be scourges on the sides, and thorns in
 the Eyes of his most distinguished Fa-
 vourites. The Murder of *Abel*, the
 Captivity of *Abraham*, the Persecu-
 tions of *Jacob*, the Distress of *Joseph*,
 the Affronts of *Moses*, the Tribula-
 tions of *David*, and severe Trials of
Job, the torturous Saws and Har-
 rows, the comfortless Den and Dun-
 geon to which *Isaiah*, *Daniel*, and
Jeremy were doomed under the Old
 Testament; the stoning of St. *Ste-*
phen, the Bonds of St. Paul, the pe-
 rilous Lives and terrible Deaths of
 the Apostles, and others, nay above
 all the barbarous Indignities and
 bitter Agonies of Christ the great
 Captain of Sufferings under the New
 Testament, were demonstrable signs
 and

and infallible Assurances that Diligence, Zeal, Integrity, and Piety, neither the most faithful Services, nor most consummate Virtues could exempt Men from Afflictions; and surely he who acts upon the most rational and prudential grounds would never have ordained nor permitted these, did they not in consequence redound to the general Good of Mankind, the Interest of Religion, and his own greater Glory. Various and considerable are the triumphs they shew, and advantages they reap, who even in perilous times *possess their Souls in patience* and chearfulness, and bear the Cross with courage and constancy. They display the *Banners* of their crucified Master, distinguish their Religion from that of *Jews* and *Mahometans*, as neither affecting any temporal Greatness, nor a sensual Paradise; they confirm their Faith, animate their Hopes, cherish and improve all

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their virtuous Qualities and spiritual Graces in this World, and enlarge their Rewards and Glories in the next. Such are the wholsom Streams that flow from this bitter Fountain, such the excellent effects and fruits wise Providence derives from these apparent evils.

Having vindicated the Wisdom, I proceed now to reconcile the Justice of God with the Sufferings of the righteous.

Thoughtless and inconsiderate Men may foolishly charge Providence with Unkindness and Cruelty in afflicting the virtuous, and miscall those Dispensations, which are seemingly rigorous, unjust and unrighteous. But they, who wisely consider and weigh the true ends and consequences of things, must allow the Reasonableness and Equity of such providential Proceedings. For are we not all the Offspring of God, created by, and dependent upon him?

and

and may he not do what he will with his own? Are not temporal Sufferings the just consequences of original Sin? and do not all, even the most strictly virtuous, incur these? Can the best of Men say they are perfectly clean, free from all human frailties, or voluntary defects? and shall a Man complain for the Punishment of his Sins? Are the Evils we generally suffer worthy to be compared with the Guilt we contract? and ought we not in equity as well as modesty to confess, *thou hast punished us much less than our Iniquities deserve?* Is there not a natural and regular course of causes and effects? and must God continually interrupt and confound the order of these to skreen the righteous from suffering? Is it not sufficient if in perilous times and upon emergent occasions to support the weak, to confirm the wavering, or raise the oppressed, he displays his marvelous

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and discriminating Providence ? Would it not be to prostitute his Power, to make his Miracles cheap and common, should he visibly exert them in behalf of every righteous Cause, and every innocent if injured Person ? These are such arguments as may very fairly be urged in vindication of Providence, and may serve to silence all those, who vainly imagine the divine Justice obliged immediately to right all Virtue in distress.

We read in the Gospel that tempestuous Winds arose, and beat upon that Ship, wherein our Saviour himself and his Disciples were embark'd ; nay the Storm was so severe, and the Danger so great, that the Disciples were *overwhelmed with fears and just ready to sink*. Now if neither their Virtue and Innocence, nor even the Presence of Divinity were a means to prevent the violence of this Tempest, or secure them from perils,
much

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much less can the best and most righteous on earth expect to escape. I know, says St. Paul, that *bonds and afflictions abide me*. Holy David cries out, from his own experience, *All thy waves and storms are gone over me*; and what was prophesied of Christ was sufficiently fulfilled, *never sorrow like his sorrow*. Now if thorns were their Crowns, afflictions and imprisonment the rewards of their faithful Services; if they *drank so deeply of the brook in the way*, 'tis a great reproach to us to murmur and complain, nay 'tis presumptuous impiety to impeach his Justice in permitting the present sufferings of the righteous and godly. We, that are Christians, cannot *think it strange concerning the fiery trial*, as if some new thing had happened to us. 'Twas prophesied long ago, that *upon the ground of my people shall come up thorns and briars*. St. Peter assures us *that judgment must begin at the*

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house of God; we were all baptized into the death of our Lord; 'tis our principal glory to know Christ and him crucified, and such Honour had all his Saints. The present life is a state of probation, wherein exercise and discipline are indispensably required, and afflictions and sufferings must be submitted to; but the time will come, when the Justice of Providence shall be manifest to all, when injured Virtue and oppressed Innocence shall be amply recompensed, and they who faithfully have conformed to the likeness of a suffering, shall resemble the triumphs of a victorious Redeemer.

And hence 'tis we discover the divine Mercy and Goodness as well as Wisdom and Justice in the sufferings of the righteous. For tho' the just Man be frequently and grievously afflicted here on Earth, and at last *perish in his Righteousness*, yet God has provided some bet-

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ter thing in Heaven, which will be an abundant reparation for all his past troubles, and temporal punishments. We may justly reckon, with St. Paul, that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed; that these light afflictions, which continue for a moment are far outbalanced by, and therefore wisely exchanged for that more exceeding, that eternal weight of glory. The death of those Innocents, those early Martyrs for Christ, might justly reflect on the Goodness of God, were there no future reckoning, no rewards and distributions in another Life. For who could less have deserved so barbarous a treatment, whose infant tenderness, and unaffected meekness might have softened and melted the most cruel and obstinate? But when we consider that these were happily delivered from the evil to come, that they fell

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a Sacrifice to him, for whom 'twas their interest and duty both to live, and die, that they were only transplanted into a much better soil, and to fill up what they wanted of the measure of their days in this vexatious and hazardous world in a place of endless Glory and consummate Bliss; such considerations as these do not only vindicate the Justice, but evidently demonstrate and illustriously display the Goodness of God.

There are but few who can reconcile God's Chastisements with his Love, or will be persuaded that his Intentions are good, when his Judgments are great. Hence that fatherly correction, which was designed for their profit, becomes to them an occasion of complaint, and that, which is an argument of God's Mercy, is pleaded against it. But did they wisely consider and duly improve their sufferings they might
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even in the midst of God's Judgments discern his Mercy, and acknowledge, in the end, that tis *good for them that they were afflicted.* Prejudice, passion, ill nature, or humour may move earthly Parents to some undue severities, but our heavenly Father's chastisements are marks of his favour, pledges of his love, and badges of our profession.

Various and considerable are the advantages we reap from afflictions and sufferings wisely managed and improved; they take off our minds from all undue levities, regulate our wills, and reform our whole behaviour, they add lustre to our virtues, improve our graces, and perfect our holiness. By these we serve God even beyond the Angels, who can only actively obey, by these we tread in the very steps of our blessed Lord and Master, who hath promised and declared that they *who suffer*

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suffer for him here shall reign with him hereafter. Hence 'tis we account them happy that suffer, and must magnifie and adore that infinite Goodness of God, which through *this vale of tears hath opened a door to everlasting Joy.*

From what has hitherto been urged give me leave to infer that if such is the Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness of God in permitting the wicked to live and prosper, and the righteous to fall into affliction; let us entirely resign our selves, and be perfectly satisfied with the dispensations of Providence, without envying the condition of others, or murmuring at our own. We have observed the folly, vanity, and misery of a vicious prosperity, which, upon due consideration or experience, must rather prove the object of our pity, than envy. We may comfort our selves that *a small thing which the righteous hath is better than*
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great revenues of the ungodly, and a little with content much rather to be chosen than abundance with uneasiness. We know *David* was grieved and seemed at first to repine much at the prosperity of the wicked, but afterwards freely acknowledges and declares that this *was his infirmity*, proceeded from the weakness of his Faith, from his ignorance of God, and the unhappy end of these Men.

Let not us therefore fret at the forbearance of God, nor grudge the borrowed lustre, ill-gotten plenty, or transitory pleasures of the wicked and ungodly; but let us content our selves with his own method and time of vindicating his Attributes, and rewarding our obedience, and in the end we shall conclude with those Angels in the Revelations, *great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints.*

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We are likewise sensible that misery is consequent to humanity, and that even the best of Men, for wise ends and reasons, have been exercised with trials, and endured great hardships; but let not these tempt us to murmur at God, or disquiet our selves. How little is the Faith, and less the Patience of those, who, at the approach of difficulties or dangers, like *Demas*, desert both their cause and master? Christians are required to glorifie God by their courage and constancy as well as innocence and integrity, and they who timorously refuse to follow their Leader to the Cross *are not worthy of him.*

Let not us therefore complain of afflictions, which are often seasonable and profitable, but never unjust or unreasonable. We know prosperity and adversity are either good or evil, as they are improved or abused. 'Tis our duty neither too eagerly
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to affect the one, nor immoderately fear, or be impatient under the other. We ought always to resign up our selves to God, who knows what is best and most expedient for us ; and to our own honest diligence and faithful endeavours beseech him, whose never failing Providence ordereth all things both in Heaven and Earth, to put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things, which be profitable for us through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*



S E R-



SERMON III.

Preach'd at the

ROYAL-CHAPEL

At St. *JAMES's* 1709.

Prov. i. ver. 32. latter part.

The Prosperity of Fools shall destroy them.



IS the natural temper of Mankind (as the experience of every age abundantly declares) to abate of their Zeal for God and spiritual Duties as their circumstances improve

prove and advance in the world, and to grow most irreligious when surrounded with a quiet and prosperous indulgence. *When riches increase*, and honours and pleasures flow in upon us we are too apt to *set our hearts upon them*, to the neglect and contempt both of God and Religion. 'Tis not easie to attain to that equality of mind that just poise and balance St. Paul was master of in the affluence or absence of the good things of this life. It requires and implies no small portion of grace, no ordinary discretion to have such a command over our Judgments, inclinations, and passions, as to *know how to be abused*, and *how to abound*, and be able duly to behave our selves under both extremes. As envy, murmuring, and discontent are usually consequent upon the former: so carnal confidence, haughtiness, and a long train of very dangerous
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and pestilent vices generally attend the latter.

Indeed plenty and prosperity are the objects of most Men's inclinations, and desires, and we are unwilling to suspect, nay can scarce be convinced of the ill consequences of that we so eagerly affect. The delightfulness of the prospect makes us willing to remove all opposing difficulties, to overlook dangers, and entertain nothing that may prevent the desired fruition. We foolishly cherish the fond delusion, pursue without restraint its variety of enjoyments, neither suspecting any snare, nor fearing any evil, till our very *security becomes our ruin*. So just is that Aphorism of the wise Man in my Text, *The Prosperity of Fools shall destroy them*. From which words I shall offer to your consideration these four particulars.

First, That Prosperity is in its own nature good, and may be improved

proved to the most commendable purposes.

Secondly, That through the corruption of our natures we are too apt to abuse it, and thereby become exposed to the greatest Sins.

Thirdly, That prosperity thus abused will exceedingly aggravate our guilt, and increase our damnation.

Fourthly and Lastly, That those, who wisely improve this blessing, and distinguish themselves here by the fruitfulness of their good works, shall hereafter receive a more abundant recompence, and shall shine like stars in the highest firmament.

First then, I am to shew that *prosperity is in its own nature good, and may be improved to the most commendable purposes.*

As a competent measure of the good things of this life is both expedient and necessary: so plenty and affluence, when wisely managed and employed, are considerable blessings.

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sings. We are assured that *every creature of God is good*, and nothing to be refused if thankfully received, and discreetly used. 'Tis God's distinguishing favour that makes the difference and inequality in our conditions and circumstances; to him we must apply *from whom every good and perfect gift cometh*, and who hath declared by his *Prophet* that *they who love and obey his law shall have great prosperity*. This was the end, reward, and motive proposed by God, pronounced by *Moses*, and which should have spurred on the *Israelites* to a chearful obedience, that in consequence hereof *every thing they did should prosper in their hands*. Hence the *Psalmist* declares that such as are *blessed of God shall inherit the earth*, and be replenished with comforts; all things shall concur to complete their felicity, and *they shall want no manner of thing that is good*. Nay God rejoices and delights in

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in plentifully rewarding the righteous and faithful ; he *taketh pleasure in the prosperity of his Servants*, and when he *maketh their corn, and wine, and oil to increase* he is said to *shower down his blessings on them*.

Hence prosperity ever has and may justly be esteemed a distinguishing mark of God's favour and love. Thus *Joseph* for his piety and chastity was beloved of God, and *whatsoever he did the Lord made it to prosper*. Holy *David* and *Solomon* were in prosperous circumstances ; and *Job*, as he was a *perfect and upright Man, one that feared God, and eschewed evil*, was encompassed and blessed with such a numerous Progeny, and such a plentiful fortune , that he was esteemed *the greatest and happiest of all the Men in the east* ; and tho' God for a trial of his Virtues, and to confute the Tempter who argued that 'twas policy, not piety, that made him so observant, with-

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drew these outward blessings, and destroyed all his Children; yet, as a reward of his integrity, faith, patience, and constancy, he restored and doubled these his favours to him, and *blessed his latter end more than his beginning*. Whence we may justly conclude that what is really the gift and blessing of God, which he delights in, and usually confers upon his best and most faithful Servants, can have no malignity in itself, but is in its own nature good.

Nor is *Prosperity* only in its own nature good, but if *duly improved may become useful too*. The better our circumstances are as we are thereby more obliged, so we are likewise more capable of promoting the Glory of God, the Salvation of our own, and others Souls. Were Mens inclinations to do good, especially those who have large Estates, and considerable Posts, but
answer-

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answerable to their power, what a reformation might we expect? how useful and serviceable would they be in their generation? In all their good motions, endeavours, and designs they would still be well attended, and draw whole multitudes after them into the paths of Godliness, Righteousness, and Sobriety. Their example and conduct would have a general influence, and either oblige, or awe Men into good manners. Tho' God, as the Apostle assures us, is not, yet common experience demonstrates that the generality of Men are such *respecters of persons*, as in most things they say or do to be governed by them. When Piety and Virtue are countenanced with the patronage of the higher powers, their subordinate ministers and dependents will be of the same stamp, at least must *abstain from all appearance of evil*. As they are sensible that to reform their

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manners is the most effectual way to recommend their persons, and that they must endeavour to be like them if they desire to be favoured and encouraged by them: so they learn no less in wisdom than duty to regulate their steps, and grow cautious and circumspect in their whole behaviour. Great and happy are the consequences of Virtue in prosperity, when *Kings* are its *nursing Fathers*, *Queens* its *nursing Mothers*, and the supreme Magistrates both in Church and State no less distinguish themselves by the fruitfulness of their good works, and the brightness of their examples, than the superiority of their stations, and extent of their power. *Blessed are the people that are in such a case, that have such glorious Patterns to imitate, such Precedents to follow.*

Riches and power carry the greatest sway and have the most prevailing ascendant over human affairs,

fairs, so that where these concur in favour of Religion they will not fail to produce great and happy effects ; like the seed sown on the good ground, which brought forth some thirty fold, some sixty, and some an hundred. Would Men in authority as heartily and zealously unite for the honour of Christ and advancement of his Doctrine, as *Herod* and *Pontius Pilate* did to destroy both, we might soon expect to see a more thorough reformation, than we can at present boast of. So great is the influence of exalted piety, and of such mighty use and importance is a well applied prosperity.

But as the best things are most liable to corruption, and when corrupted are the worst : so prosperity exposes us to sundry snares and temptations, and is too frequently the Parent of the most heinous enormities. Whence I come to shew,

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Secondly, *That prosperity however innocent it is in its self, or may be useful in its consequences, yet through the depravity of our natures we are too apt to abuse it, and thereby become exposed to the greatest sins.*

Our carnal appetites too eagerly desire and too immoderately pursue all temporal advantages without fearing any danger, or suspecting consequences. We thirst after great honours, riches, and pleasures, as feaverish spirits long for drink or water, when we should be much happier in the want than enjoyment of our desires. And as skilful Physicians frequently save their Patients by restraining, or thwarting their unruly wills: so God often mercifully denies what we eagerly but unwarily request to our hurt.

All things that please do not consequently profit; our very diversion frequently becomes our ruin, and those things which are amiable to
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the eye, and pleasant in the mouth are often bitter to the stomach, and have a sharp sting in the end.

To grow great and honourable in the eye of the world, and to be advanced to high and important stations seem to aspiring minds very desirable things; like the Sons of *Zebedee* we might confidently rely upon our own strength, and think our selves capable of managing such exalted posts, when, God knows, a strange giddiness might soon affect our heads, and when we fancied we stood most firm and secure we should be in greatest danger of falling.

To be rich in goods, to keep a great retinue, and enjoy large Possessions is in the esteem of the world to be wondrously happy: But did we wisely consider the many snares and temptations that plenty and abundance expose us to; did we discern those dangerous hooks that
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lie hid and concealed under those tempting baits; did we reflect how unguarded and defenceless we are at such times as these when we need the strongest armour, when we are assaulted on the one hand by subtle enemies, and designing Friends, betrayed on the other through our own deceitful hearts, and surrounded on all sides with busie flatterers; had we the same care of our Souls as we usually indulge to our Bodies, we should have no such great reason to be so fond of their state, as we generally are.

To regale our selves with all manner of delights, to *eat, drink, and be merry* are the highest felicities our carnal appetites are capable of; but did we consider that by thus pampering our Bodies how we hurt our Souls, how we alienate our affections from things heav'nly and spiritual, if we have any hope or prospect beyond the grave, we should be far
from

from valuing such a kind of life our selves, or envying it in others.

Indeed plenty and prosperity lead us into so many snares, and expose us to such dangers, that 'tis a great rarity to enjoy them, and not be corrupted by them. Wisely and duly to manage the prosperous extreme, and grow better, not worse, as we increase and abound, is certainly a more difficult province than Mens prejudiced notions do, or are willing to believe. We are apt to flatter our selves with such thoughts as these; how happy should we be were we in better circumstances, more enriched in goods, or advanced in the world? what greater opportunities should we then have of promoting God's Glory, and the publick good? How effectually might we then by our counsel, authority, interest, and example countenance virtue, suppress vice, and be instrumental to the salvation of others

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others as well as our own? Where-
as *we know not what we should be*,
were these our wishes fulfilled, how
soon our minds would be changed
and easily diverted from these pro-
posed good designs; how the cares
of a new state might employ our
thoughts, our endeavours, and time;
which, instead of rendring us more
zealous for, might make us more
forgetful both of God and Religion
than we were before.

Prosperity does not, like an open
enemy, assault and terrifie, but, like
a pretended friend, fondly courts and
caresses, and at the same time un-
dermines us. *Its favours are deceit-*
ful, its *precious balms* rather wound
than give ease to our minds, and,
like a treacherous *Judas*, it kisses,
and betrays. It insensibly insinuates
itself, and gradually deadens and in-
disposes the heart to all spiritual en-
joyments; it works so artfully and
wounds so tenderly that we scarce
feel

feel any hurt, or fear any danger. — — —

The higher we are advanced, the more slippery is our standing, tho' we fondly think our selves then most firm and immoveable. Security and presumption too often prove the unhappy consequences of very great promotions, and when exalted above the common level of Mankind we are apt to flatter our selves that we are *more than Men*. There is a *leaven of pride* that usually accompanies great stations, and tho' to be lowly and humble upon promotion is a lesson taught by many, and commended by all, yet is it practised but by few. There is no temptation *our grand adversary the Devil* more frequently or successfully employs than this. With the powerful charms hereof he had the confidence to assault even our *Saviour* himself; and therefore mounting *him upon the pinnacle of the temple,*
and

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and shewing him the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them with the promise of all these if he would fall down and worship him, thought no argument to be more specious or more likely to prevail. And tho' his Divinity render'd him sufficiently proof against this as well as all other temptations; yet experience demonstrates that even the most righteous on earth have not always thus escaped, but have too frequently been foiled thereby. Holy David, the Man after God's own Heart, grew secure and presumptuous in the midst of his prosperity; he thought his mountain was made so strong that it could never be removed; and having sufficiently experienced the danger of that state, solemnly charges his Son Solomon with his last expiring breath to shew himself a man; to be always arm'd and prepared against the malice of some, the flatteries of others, and especially those snares and temptations

tions to evil, which his sovereign power and great glory would naturally and necessarily expose him to. We read not only of a proud *Pharaoh*, a lofty *Nebuchadnezzar*, and presumptuous *Senacherib*, but even the good *Hezekiah's* heart was lifted up with his grandeur. Even the best of Saints have narrowly escaped being overcome with the snares and temptations of prosperity, and therefore *St. Paul* when he was carried up into the third Heaven, was forced to be buffeted by the messenger of Satan lest he should be exalted above measure.

And as the great and honourable; so the rich in this World often abuse their wealth, and thereby sin against God, who gave them such blessings. 'Tis the Psalmist's observation, that when Men's fortunes increase, they are too apt to trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches. Being
able

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able to make such ample provision for themselves by abounding with that, which commands all things, they think they need not regard Man, nor even depend upon God. Thus the haughty Prince of *Tyrus* by his policy in Government, and skill in trading, having amassed immense treasures of Gold and Silver, *lifted up his heart as the heart of God*, and promised complete happiness in, and from himself. Nay many more instances there are of those, who have been more forgetful of God, and less grateful in their returns to him, the more merciful and bountiful he has been to them. When the *Israelites* were closed in their own fat, how did their *mouths utter proud and perverse things*? Their fulness was generally the occasion of their wantonness, and when God rained down *Manna*, and gave them most plenty, they were most rebellious. The rich Glutton in the *Gospel*, how indul-

indulgent was he to himself? how ungrateful to God? how unmerciful to the Poor? And how many are there now, whom God hath blessed with abundance, who either through a scandalous distrust are afraid to use, or more shamefully mispend it to the dishonour of the Author?

And as we are too apt to abuse our greatness to Pride, and our abundance to Covetousness, or Prodigality: so are we likewise our health and strength to Luxury and Sensuality. When all things run smooth, and we have the liberty to indulge, gratifie, and fulfil our own hearts desires, we are too apt to run into dangerous extremes. Our corrupt appetites and wills do then too easily over-rule our reason; our zeal for Religion declines and cools, and we become soon *lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God*. Whereas afflictions might rouse us from the lethargy of Sin, to a sense of Duty,

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being never awaken'd by these, we grow careless and secure; nay, like some prophane Mariners, think Devotion only necessary in Storms and Tempests. Thus the *Epicurean* fool in the *Gospel* sang a *Requiem* to his soul, *soul, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry*, forgetting all this while from whom he received, and to whom that very night he was required to return it. Thus *Solomon* and *Sampson*, those whom no artifices could delude, nor the strongest cords hold, have been yet weaken'd and overcome by sensual enchantments. Hence many are so besotted and bigotted to the pleasures of the world, that they chuse their portion in this life, and neither value nor desire any other felicity.

Thus we find that through the corruptions of our natures we are too apt to abuse the honours, riches and pleasures of the World, and thereby

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thereby become exposed to the greatest Sins. Let none therefore be discouraged, *tho' one be made rich, if the glory of his house, or outward comforts of his life be advanced and increased*: Since the more every one receives the more he is exposed, and the greater and higher will his accounts run. Which brings me to my third particular proposed, *That prosperity if abused will exceedingly aggravate our guilt, and increase our damnation.* God is certainly a just as well as a bountiful God, he will be sure to proportion his rewards or punishments in another life according to our good or ill use of his blessings in this, and to whom his Mercies have been great, to them his Judgments will be so too, if they have despised and abused them. Tho' some Men from their own and others present impunity as corrupt as themselves, vainly and confidently triumph, *thy Judg-*

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ments are far above out of our sight, and therefore desie we all our enemies ; yet sooner or later God will be justified to the great confusion of all insolent and daring offenders, and such mighty sinners shall be mightily tormented. When God with rebukes doth chasten Men for sin, the nature, circumstances and degrees of their offences, their different talents, means, opportunities and obligations are distinctly considered, and proportionably to these are their punishments either lighter or heavier. † When Man that is in honour hath no understanding, but either by his sluggishness or inactivity in so exalted a station, or his wallowing in intemperance, lust and sensuality, may justly be compared to the Beasts that perish ; when the great and mighty ones, who are entrusted with the highest Posts of Government, and on whose integrity and care the security and welfare of the whole

whole Kingdom in a great measure depends ; when such as these out of base principles, or inglorious ends prostitute their high characters, and betray their trust, as their guilt is attended with more aggravating circumstances, and the consequences thereof more fatal and pernicious ; so *the furnace of Hell will be seven times hotter for them than for ordinary sinners.*

When the rich Men of the world inordinately pursue the wages of unrighteousness, resolve to be unjust to increase and advance, and cease to be charitable for fear of lessening their fortunes, we may justly pronounce in the language of St. James, *Jam. 5. 1, 2, 3. Go to now ye rich Men, weep and howl for the miseries that shall come on you ; your riches are corrupted, your garments are moth-eaten, your gold and silver is cankered, the rust of them shall witness against you, they shall eat your flesh*

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as it were fire, yea you have *treasured up unto your selves wrath against the day of wrath.* No less certain than tremendous will that sentence be to such sinners as these at the last day. *Sons, remember that ye in your lifetime received your good things,* which you might have employed to the Glory of God, and the Salvation of your Souls, but having shamefully mispent and abused these great blessings, whilst others, have improved a much smaller portion, *behold now they are comforted, but ye are tormented.*

When Men are not content with those innocent liberties God and reason allow, but intemperately indulge themselves in sensuality and pleasure; when these engross their whole thoughts, endeavours, and time to the scandalous contempt both of God and their duty, they are frequently visited in this life with some extraordinary Judgments,

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as we read *the wrath of God came on the Israelites* when they were *wanton*ing in sensuality, *and slew the fattest of them*, and a fire of Brimstone consumed the *Sodomites* when they were *intemperately eating, drinking* and revelling.

But tho' they are not chastised here in this exemplary manner, yet they can by no means escape the just Judgments of God, who *will render to every one according to his deeds*.

I need not inform you how fearful and dreadful a thing *it is to fall into the hands of an angry God*. I could wish all Men would endeavour as carefully to avoid the guilt, as they are sensible of the danger. 'Twere happy indeed had we not so much just occasion to reproach these times as 'tis to be feared we have, and which without flattery and prevarication cannot be disguised.

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I would much rather desire to have my fourth and last particular to be applicable to this Age, and especially to this audience, That *they who wisely improve the advantages of their stations, and distinguish themselves here by the fruitfulness of their good works, shall hereafter receive a more abundant recompence, and shine like stars in the highest firmament.* Tho' God is glorified by his Justice as well as Mercy, yet the one is represented as *his strange work*, and rather the result of necessity than choice, whilst the other is stiled his most darling Attribute, and the exercise whereof he chiefly delights in. 'Tis our interest and duty under all circumstances, but more especially so to manage the advantages of prosperity, as to become objects of the latter, and escape the former, always considering and remembering this our Saviour's Maxim, That

to whomsoever much is given, of them shall be the more required.

'Tis observed in my Text that *the Prosperity only of Fools shall destroy them*; whereas they who have discreetly employed this remarkable blessing, as the benefits they procure are great and general, so will their recompence be large and considerable. The Almighty himself hath declared that such as *honour him he will honour*, and they who by their interest, authority, example, and zeal turn many to righteousness shall shine like the stars for ever and ever. The Sons of Zebedee's request to sit on his right and left hand in his kingdom, tho' not determined by our Saviour then, yet was to be given to them for whom it was prepared of his Father. And who can better deserve or become such high posts, than those whose exemplary piety in the most eminent stations has greatly advanced the Glory of God, the Peace of
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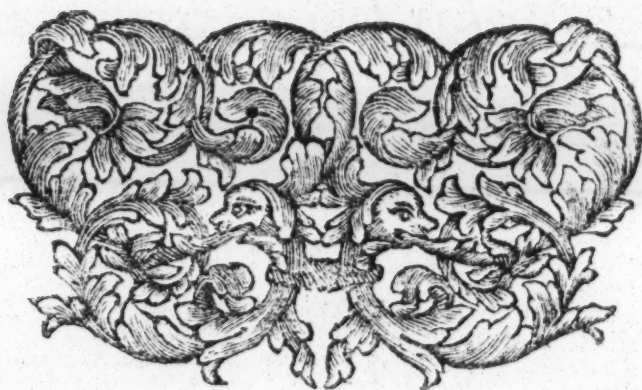
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the World, and the Salvation of many Souls? Give therefore unto the Lord, O ye mighty, give unto the Lord honour and strength, give the Lord the glory due unto his name, worship the Lord with holy worship. You have all the advantages your own hearts can desire or God bestow. The many blessings you enjoy, and the different talents you receive were dispensed for good ends, and therefore ought not to be concealed, much less be abused. Your honours are but shadows, your titles mere pageantry, nor will they procure any inward reverence and esteem, whatever outward respect they may, when separated from virtue; your only sure way to be great is to be good, to be truly honourable is to be strictly religious. And surely you cannot but esteem it your highest happiness and privilege to become the blessed instruments of reforming the world, and being under

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der the influence of a QUEEN no less SOVEREIGN in piety than dignity, as great a Blessing to the present age as a Pattern to the next. However by this means you may be the reproach of the foolish, yet you will not fail to procure the concurrent favour and esteem of the wise and virtuous, by whom your *memories will be blessed*, and who will *give glory to God* for giving *such gifts unto Men*. You will moreover continually hear the delightful harmony, and feel the comfortable transports of a quiet Conscience. But above all you will be rewarded by God in Heaven, where, as *there is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the Stars*, those celestial Bodies differing from one another in glory: so, according to the fruitfulness of your good works, and the bright influences of your examples you will be diffe-

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differently distinguished, and re-
ceive more abundant pledges of
God's Love, and higher degrees of
Glory.



S E R-



SERMON IV.

Preach'd at the
 ROYAL-CHAPEL
 At St. JAMES's 1709.

LUC. 13. ver. 1, 2, 3.

There were present at that season some that told Jesus of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their Sacrifices.

Jesus answering said unto them, suppose ye that these Galileans were Sinners above all the Galileans

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*lileans because they suffer'd
such things ;*

*I tell you nay ; but except ye re-
pent ye shall all likewise perish.*



ERE is the report of a very melancholy story that was brought to our Saviour, the truth whereof is not doubted, though what their crime and provocation was is at best but conjecture. ✕ Whether 'twere for a seditious insurrection against the *Roman* Government contrived and carried on by one *Judas* of *Galilee*, who, we read, drew much people after him, and perished in the attempt ; or whether these *Galileans* were *Samaritans*, utter Enemies to the *Jews*, and therefore more likely to be so severely dealt withal, and were only called *Galileans*, because *Judas*, the head of their faction, was such, as the writers

ters of the Jewish Histories have left us in the dark, and Expositors themselves are not well agreed upon; so we must leave you at liberty to judge what we are at a loss to determine. And then what the reasons were that induced them to this relation, whether twere only out of mere curiosity, or from an overweening conceit of their own merits, because they were preserved, whilst others perished, or from some indignation against those *Galileans*, as we may probably conclude from that invidious expostulation *can any good thing come out of Galilee?* Which, or whether all of these together were the true causes of this question might prove as needless to examine, as 'twould be difficult to resolve. That these *Galileans* were slain, that they were suddenly slain, nay barbarously slain when they were at their sacrifice, and so their *blood mingled with their sacrifices*

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crifices is manifestly true; that they were sinners, that faction and sedition, whereof most agree they were guilty, are very notorious crimes, and deserved punishment is equally certain. But then that *these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans*, nay and for this only reason *because they suffered such things* is a very gross mistake. He who *knew what was in man* knew the hearts of his Disciples, that they were ready to suppose and conclude those to be the greatest sinners that were the greatest sufferers. And this is the fault of many well meaning Men, they do not consider the wise ends and designs of Providence, but erroneously judge by outward appearances, and so determine accordingly. Our Saviour therefore, who as wisely declined to satisfy Men's needless curiosities, as he took all opportunities to rectify their minds, and regulate their manners, gives them

them this very short but instructive lesson; that our present punishments are not always proportion'd to our past crimes; and therefore we are not to flatter our selves that we are better, because we escape, nor judge others as worse because of their Sufferings, since it may happen *alike to the righteous and the wicked*; but that as all of us now do, and will always need repentance, and that it will stand us in more stead to amend our own failings, than upbraid those of others: so the best use we can make of such extraordinary judgments, and the most likely means to prevent all uncharitable censures, is to turn the severity upon our selves, and correct the errors of our own lives, lest we also deserve and fall into perdition. For *except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*. From the words thus explained, I shall offer to your consideration these three particulars.

H

First,

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First, I shall shew how forward the world is to judge of the nature and degrees of mens offences according to the severity of the divine judgments.

Secondly, That it is very unsafe and unjust to conclude that the greatest sufferers are always the greatest sinners.

Thirdly and lastly, I shall direct you to the true use we ought to make of such extraordinary judgments, *viz.* to lead us to a sincere and speedy repentance.

First then, I am to shew how forward the world is to judge of the nature and degrees of mens offences according to the severity of the divine judgments. The truth whereof I shall endeavour to illustrate by two or three instances from Scripture. All of you have heard of the character and circumstances of *Job*, who was esteemed a *perfect and upright man, one that feared God, and eschewed*

eschewed evil, that once enjoyed as great a share of outward blessings, as mortality itself could wish for, or even the world bestow; abundantly blessed on the one hand with a very plentiful fortune, and proportionably happy on the other in as numerous a progeny. In his prosperity, so unblamable was his life, so cautious was he of giving offence either to God, or Man, that we do not find him either charged by the one, or suspected by the other; and tho' according to his resolution he *held fast his integrity*, yet when so suddenly and so grievously suffering in his estate, his family, and person, his friends could not forbear, what he resolved *his own heart* should never do, even to *reproach* and upbraid him. They reason'd, and as they thought very wisely too, concerning the various dispensations of Providence; they knew no other cause of affliction than sin, that accord-

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ing to the usual method of God, and the tenor of his law, the happiness or misery was proportion'd to the piety or degeneracy of Mens lives; they had confirmed themselves in this persuasion by a long and constant observation and experience; nay, they could, if necessary, even multiply examples of this nature, and defy'd the past as well as present times, to produce one contrary instance. *Remember who ever perished being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?* And therefore tho' they could not charge *Job* in his prosperity with any extravagant crimes, as if he were either forgetful of God, injurious to the publick, or unmerciful to the poor; yet to account for those judgments and terrors of the Lord, that seemed as it were set in array against him, to reconcile these with his justice and veracity, and rather to accuse Man, than to impeach the divine dispensations,

fations, they believe him guilty of some very flagrant tho' secret enormities. They considered *that Men see not as God sees*, that many things escape their scrutiny, which to the all-searching eye of providence, are plain and visible, and therefore since they were so unalterably fixed and wedded to this persuasion, that the greater sufferers Men are, the greater are their crimes, they presently conclude him to be a very notorious hypocrite; and that tho' he had imposed upon the World by a dissembled Piety, yet he could not so successfully prevaricate with God, but that even his most artful fallacies were discovered by him, and now visited with proportionable plagues.

Another Instance of this nature we find very remarkably displayed in that question of the Disciples, *Master, who did sin, this Man, or his Parents, that he was born blind?* So

signal a judgment they conclude must be the consequence of some very notorious crime, and therefore they presume they need no information in what they are sufficiently satisfied: But the stress of the question refers to this, whether his own personal or parental Sins were the causes of this blindness? That the *sins of the fathers were visited upon their children*, we find plainly revealed; but how a man could actually sin before he was born, seemed impossible to conceive. And therefore the Disciples must needs be tainted and corrupted with that Pythagorean notion, very prevalent then among the Pharisees, concerning the transmigration of souls, which held that the soul which sinned in one body might be punished in another. That this blindness proceeded from one or both of these they took for granted, and the mistake they lay under seemed to be

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grounded upon this, that they concluded sin to be always, because it was often the cause of suffering: Whence we may observe, that if those who were the nearest to our Saviour, who from his publick and private conferences had all opportunities of informing their judgments; and rectifying their notions, and to whom *it was given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*, were yet so grossly mistaken in this point; 'tis less to be wonder'd at if others of lower attainments, and who were never favour'd with such excellent privileges, were obnoxious to so common and prevailing an error.

Another, and the last instance I shall mention of this nature, is that recorded in *the Acts*, of the Viper's fastning to St. Paul's hand; which when the Barbarians saw, they said, *no doubt this man is a murderer, whom, tho' he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.* They did

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not consider, nor would they allow themselves time to expect or observe what would be the event; but as rashly, as suddenly pronounced him a notorious Malefactor. This was their logick, this their lesson, which by the light of nature they were instructed in, that by the happiness or misery attending Men in this life, their good or bad conduct was clearly known and distinguished. And that this was really their persuasion, may be fairly inferred from their consequent practice; for *they looked when he should have swoll'n*, as 'tis usual with some who are poyson'd in this nature, or as it more expeditiously works with others, that he should suddenly expire; but after that for a considerable time they had narrowly observed and perceived no harm, they changed their Sentiments, and as 'tis common to proceed from one extreme to another, he that just before *was*

a mur-

a murderer, now commences a God:
Thus making no other estimate of persons and things, than by outward appearances, as they judged him when he was first seized by this viper, the worst of Men, so by the power he had of restraining those natural properties, whereby he was secur'd from infection, nothing would serve, but they must pronounce him even *more than man*. Upon this change of the scene, how changeable were their opinions? how different their notions? Which plainly demonstrates that they looked upon this as an established rule, that men were better or worse the more they prospered or suffered in the world. From these and sundry other instances, which our own experience as well as Scripture may furnish us withal, it very manifestly appears that Men are too apt to believe that sin is always the cause of suffering, and that the degrees of sin are proportion-

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portionable to the degrees of punishment.

To prevent this so common and fatal a mistake, I shall proceed secondly to shew that 'tis very unsafe and unjust to conclude that the greatest sufferers are always the greatest sinners.

That sin in its very nature is destructive and mischievous, that her ways are very dangerous ways, and *all her paths are snares*; that judgments generally overtake the impious, and wicked and *ungodly men scarce live out half their days*; nay, that God often in a very visible and remarkable manner displays the rod of his vengeance against presumptuous offenders, and for a terror and warning to others, not to glory in their impunity, consumes them in a moment, and so makes their punishments as exemplary as their crimes, none who are in the least acquainted with the tenor of scripture, and the nature

nature of God's proceedings, can be ignorant of.

But that sin is solely and constantly the cause of suffering, that God neither has, nor can have any other end in afflicting mankind, is as false and groundless, as 'tis impious to conclude. For there may be many wise reasons which may induce God to afflict the righteous, which we are not so thoroughly acquainted with; nay there are some, which our own short-sighted reason, assisted with divine revelation, can account for.

Thus, as was instanced before in the case of *Job*, those great damages he sustained both in his family, body, and estate, were not punishments consequent upon, and proportion'd to his crimes; for God declares him to be one, who for the integrity of his heart, and strict holiness of his life, had no parallel; but they were for the exercise and
trial

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trial of his faith and patience, that his virtues being purified and refined in this furnace of affliction, like the Sun after an Eclipse, might shine forth and display themselves with a brighter lustre. And thus plainly did he demonstrate his sincerity to the world, and how far he was from deserving that imputation of hypocrisy, which his cruel comforters unjustly upbraided him with.

Thus in the case of the person that was born blind, our Saviour expressly declares, that neither his personal nor parental sins (as his disciples grossly imagined) were the causes of this blindness; but that the *works of God might be made manifest*, his infinite power and mercy being more eminently displayed in the recovery of those, who by all human Knowledge or Art, are judged incurable.

And thus St. *Paul's* suffering shipwreck, and afterwards the viper's
fast-

lasting on his hand, were not designed and inflicted by God as punishments for the sins and transgressions of his life; but that by two such great and miraculous deliverances, he might with more Authority enforce, and the barbarous people be better disposed to receive the Gospel.

From all which instances it very manifestly appears, that temporal judgments are no conclusive arguments of the divine displeasure, nor are they always proportion'd according to mens demerits, but that God has oftentimes higher and nobler ends to answer; and therefore 'tis a rash presumption in us thus peremptorily to determine, and pronounce those the greatest sinners, who are the greatest sufferers. It is the wise man's observation, that *there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; and again there be wicked men, to whom*

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whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. That is, there is sometimes a strange vicissitude in the state and condition of human affairs, and the ordinary dispensations of providence seem quite inverted; bad men enjoying those advantages which the most virtuous are entitled to, and good men suffering those punishments, which even the worst of men deserve. Nor ought we to impeach either the wisdom or justice of God for these seeming irregularities, nor complain with those in the Prophet, that 'tis *vain to serve the Lord, and what profit is it, that we have kept his ordinances?* Since he has the power and privilege to do what he will with his own; since this life is only a state of probation; and since he hath appointed a day for a general distinction; wherein, however partial he may seem now, will make a most exact and ample distribution of rewards and punishments.

If

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If then God in justice may, and for wise reasons often does permit the wicked to prosper, and the *righteous to fall into afflictions*; if the rewards and punishments of this life are promiscuously dispensed; and therefore, by concluding those to be more or less sinful, who are more or less miserable, we often judge falsely, and must always judge rashly; the most advisable Method we can take, is to hope, and think the best, to err on the most charitable, which is the safest side. When therefore we behold men suddenly smitten of God, *dejected and brought low through oppression, through affliction, through any plague or trouble*, let not us add the load of our censure to the burthen of their other misfortunes, nor by unwarrantably charging them with guilt, justly incur it our selves; but let us think soberly and tenderly, judging them as we desire they should us, under
the

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the *like calamitous circumstances*. Let us look inwardly upon our selves, and observe our own defects, and then we shall find less inclination and leisure to make too severe remarks upon others. Let us not as unjustly suspect and condemn those that suffer, as falsely excuse and flatter our selves for our escape; but considering that we deserve the same, if not greater severity, conclude 'tis not our merit, but the *Lord's mercy only, that we are not consumed*. Let the examples of others, which ought to be a terror and warning to all, awaken our souls, and work us into a serious humiliation and contrition, lest we also (as there is none that can be secure of impunity) fall next under the sentence of his heavy displeasure. And this brings me to my third and last particular, wherein I am to shew the true use we ought to make of such extraordinary judgments, *viz.*
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to lead us to a sincere and speedy repentance. This indeed is a lesson which we all ought to learn, and must needs be dangerous to neglect. For since the chief end and design of example, is to make men wiser and better; since God often destroys some, and preserves others, who are equally sinful, it must needs be a most shameful and monstrous abuse both of the judgments and mercies of Heaven, its judgments upon others, and its mercies to our selves, if after so much time allowed for Repentance, after such means offer'd to prevent and escape the punishment, we resolve to *abound* more and more *in iniquity*, and continue to tempt and provoke the most High. Let then the consideration of God's judgments upon others, strike an awe into our minds, and instead of censuring them, let us examine our selves how dangerous our own state is,

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and so *work out our salvation with fear and trembling*. Let us with all sincerity of heart, and from the bottom of our souls, repent us of our faults, and *return unto the Lord, that so iniquity may not be our ruin*.

Let us beseech God, that he would *give us grace to will*, and power also to perform what is acceptable in his sight: For we must not be merely passive in our regeneration, as we were in our creation. *God worketh in us to will and to do*, but never without us. Tho' divine grace is so necessary, that all our labours are fruitless without its concurrence, and *Paul may plant, and Apollos water*, and all to no purpose, *unless God gives the increase*; yet neither will that alone avail, and so irresistibly work, as to excuse our endeavours, and exclude all repentance, since God requires this as an indispensable condition; and tho' 'tis he alone that made us, and not we our selves,
yet

yet we are expressly assured, that he will not save us without our selves.

Let it be our care then, that neither of these be wanting, but let us implore the Assistance of Heaven, and exert our utmost power to *make our calling and election sure.*

Nor is the business of repentance an inconsiderable work, and to be huddled up in an instant, but such a task that requires much time and great pains. For God will not accept of a few sighs and tears, as a sufficient sacrifice for our sins, nor a faint promise to leave them when we are just leaving the world. That sorrow which St. Paul stiles a godly one, such an one that worketh repentance to salvation, is clearly known by its fruits; 'tis accompanied with a great *carefulness* over our thoughts, words, and actions, an endeavouring to *cleanse* and clear our hearts from all manner of pollution, a just *indignation* a-

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gainst former sins, and a *fear* lest we return again to the same vicious courses, a vehement *desire* to please God, a fervent *zeal* for his glory, and a severe *revenge* on our selves, for all our transgressions, by mortifying and *crucifying our affections and lusts*. That *sorrow* which produces such effects as these, is such an one, that we shall have no reason to *repent of*; but a mere fruitless sorrow, such as that of *Ahab*, which tho' it worked upon his spirit, and *humbled him* for the present, yet had no lasting effect; or like that of *Judas*, which tho' it was so great, that it *made him burst asunder*, yet no way conducted to the reformation of his life, is vain and ineffectual, is only mocking God, and deluding our own souls. Sorrow is indeed a good introduction, and a necessary step to repentance, but then it is dangerous to mistake it for the whole of our Duty. There are many other essential

tial and preparatory parts: There must be a strict scrutiny into our hearts and lives, a severe accusation of our selves before the bar of conscience. We must not dare to withhold our most secret Faults, nor be ashamed to own even our greatest enormities; for we are assured, that *he shall not prosper that covereth his sins*, and he who is too proud for *confession*, is unfit for pardon. Nay, we cannot truly be said to be sorry for our sins, unless we entirely confess, in order to forsake them. Those superficial lip approaches, which never reach the heart, nor have any influence on our lives, are vain and unprofitable; God will not be imposed upon, nor can we obtain remission upon such easy terms. That confession which only empties the soul of a present load, to supply it with a greater, that inclines us to abstain, at some peculiar seasons, from some particular vices, to in-

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introduce more variety, or to return again to the same with a fresher appetite is abominable to the Lord; like that *unclean spirit* we read of in the Gospel, which was no sooner gone out of the man, but it's room was supplied with *seven other spirits more wicked than himself*, and so the last state of that man was worse than the first. If we would bring forth fruits meet for repentance, we must carefully abstain from all manner of evil, and actually pursue every thing that is good. *Old things* (as the Apostle expresses it) *must be done away, and all things must become new*. For he that has truly and earnestly repented, has another turn of thoughts, another frame of words, and another scheme of actions; his affections and passions have new objects, and new ends, and he becomes in all respects so thoroughly transformed that he seems a new creature.

Some

Some indeed there are who think they may justly be stiled Penitents, and presume they have made a good proficiency in grace, when those lusts of the flesh, which they formerly indulged and so fondly doated on, thro' the frequency of use, or impotency of age, now lose their relish, and seem insipid to them, tho' perhaps as great, if not a more mischievous sin, *viz.* that of covetousness, which they were not before inclined to, succeeds in the room: And this they absurdly mistake for repentance, and call forsaking of sin, when 'tis, in truth, nothing else but exchanging one vice for another, and those sins which such men formerly complied with, but now forbear to commit, they cannot be so properly said to leave, as that those sins left them. Others there are who have been very much accustomed to excess of riot, as

drunkenness, revellings, and such like; yet retiring for a season into some remote climate, and not meeting there with suitable company, and such agreeable accommodations, grow more sober and regular: And this they are too apt to miscale repentance; nay they might perhaps fully intend then to continue always in this temper; yet upon their return home, and welcomed there by those old engaging and irresistible allurements, their good purposes, *like the morning dew, soon pass away*, and the very same temptations have the same power. But however light and partial a notion such as these may entertain of this duty of repentance, yet it really includes no less than destroying the body of sin, and transforming the whole man. For we must not secretly retain, nor willingly indulge our selves in any kind of vice; we must not spare

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Agag and the fattest of the cattle, nor permit any favourite *sin to reign in our mortal bodies*, but must, as far as in us lies, sacrifice every accursed *Amalekite*.

Nor are we to rest in a bare cessation from vice, and aim at no more than a mere inclination to virtue, but from good dispositions must proceed to good actions, from actions to habits, and thence persevere, delight, and abound in good works. To be righteous by halves, and become almost a Christian, may perhaps deserve praise and commendation from an Heathen; but the Religion we profess is of an uniform nature; nor can we compound with God by forbearing the commission of one sin to comply with another. The sacrifices we offer must be accompanied with sincerity, and God requires our whole hearts and souls without any pre-

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prevarication. Nay repentance is a work that must be the result of our own active endeavours, and cannot possibly be done by proxy. As we shall not be punished for other mens crimes, so neither shall we be rewarded for their virtues; were it possible to obtain an overplus of piety, yet there is no transmitting or imputing it to others. Our own works must be our comforters or accusers, and 'tis to these at the last day that we must stand or fall.

Let then all the parts and members of our bodies, all the powers and faculties of our souls be exercised and employed in working out our salvation by an entire confession, a sincere contrition, and an actual reformation; and then whatever calamities befall others amidst the various changes and chances of this mortal life, we shall be most likely to secure

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cure our selves, however we shall be sure to escape what we cannot think of without horror, those intolerable sufferings reserved for reprobate and impenitent sinners.



S E R-



SERMON V.

Preach'd at the

ROYAL-CHAPEL

At St. *JAMES*'s 1712.

Eph. 4. ver. 26.

Be ye angry, and sin not.



HE passions and affections of our souls being implanted by God, who made nothing in vain, we may be assur'd they serve to promote sundry excellent ends and commendable purposes; and therefore are not through a stoical humour

mour utterly to be extinguished, but to be improved to their various and proper uses. 'Twere easy to demonstrate the subserviency of these to religion and virtue; how powerfully the love of God excites us to keep his commandments; the desire of vertue to seek and persue it, the hopes of attaining it to surmount all opposing difficulties; and the joy in the fruition when it is attained: As also how the hatred or fear of any evil is a means to avoid it; the sorrow that we have committed it disposes us to repentance and anger, to take some revenge upon our selves. Thus are all or each of them in their proper places, and due exercises, not only innocent, but useful. Nay anger, which sounds the harshest of them all, is not evil in itself, but is justified from Scripture as well as Philosophy, and the Apostle in my text no less than the Moralists in their schemes confirms and declares

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clares that we may *be angry and sin not.*

From which words I shall first shew how far and in what respects this passion of anger is innocent and commendable.

Secondly, when it exceeds its due bounds and limits, and becomes sinful; with some proper motives and directions to regulate this passion.

First then, I am to shew how far and in what respects this passion of anger is innocent and commendable.

That the motions hereof are natural and necessary, and that at some times and upon some occasions we must do violence to our selves to suppress our resentments, is universally allowed of. For outward objects strike the senses, and, as it were, force their different impressions upon the mind, and we can no more forbear shewing our
dislike

dislike and indignation at the evils we either see or hear, than we can help being affected at the good we have the same evidence of. There arises from the particular complexions and constitutions of men more or less of this; nature will prevail, and tho' the degrees are different, yet they who are wholly insensible are hardly men. This, no less than those other passions of love, desire, and fear, is implanted in our natures, and must exert it's power. God is it's author, and therefore it neither is nor can be in itself evil, or simply unlawful.

Nor does nature only dictate, but the judgments of the wisest and best of men confirm and justify it. There is a tameness of spirit that deserves rather our censure and reprehension, than our esteem and countenance. 'Tis both allowable and commendable to resent where 'tis proper, since to be upon all occasions

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casions passive, however by some it may be miscall'd courage, argues really a downright weakness of mind. Tho'tis the wisdom of a man to pass by some offences, yet'tis little better than folly to overlook all. 'Tis a kind of invitation to many to prosecute their malice, and not only to continue, but even multiply injuries.

Nor is anger only justifiable by the voice of reason, and the practice of the wisest men, but by revelation too, and the conformity of the best and most perfect Christians. The precepts of the Gospel do by no means tend to extirpate, but only to regulate the passions. That whereof we now treat is at sundry times and upon sundry accounts very allowable and necessary. Indeed our Saviour forbids us being *angry with our brother without a cause*; St. James exhorts us *to be slow to wrath*, and St. Paul, *to be angry and sin not*; all which imply that 'tis not
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the use, but the abuse of this passion that is condemned in scripture. We know the best things may basely be inverted to the vilest purposes; 'tis our duty to rectify and discreetly manage, not forbear the use of them. There are causes for which, and times wherein, we not only may, but *do well to be angry*. We read that *Moses*, who had the Character of being *the meekest man upon the face of the earth*, yet was frequently in wrath, as with *Pharaoh*, *Eleazer*, and the *children of Israel*. *Jacob's* anger was justly kindled against his wife *Rachel* for this her too passionate and profane request, *Give me children, or I dye*. Nay, our Saviour himself, who neither did, nor indeed could sin, *beheld*, not only with grief, but even *anger* too, the inveterate stupidity and obstinacy of the *Jews*. And tho' he patiently bore all revilings, contempts, and indignities that were cast on his person;

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yet

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yet when he perceived his father's house exposed and prostituted to indecency and wickedness, his passion was raised, *he overthrew their tables, and drove them all out of the temple.*

In imitation whereof, at proper seasons, and upon just grounds, all good Christians may, those in superior stations more especially, ought to shew their resentments. When the venerable name of God, his word and ordinances are exposed and prophaned, when the most holy religion is jested upon by some, disputed against by others, and disparaged by all; if we have any spark of love or zeal for these things glowing in our breasts, we can not but express great indignation against such presumptuous scoffers. To seem unconcerned and indifferent at such times as these, is *to be ashamed of our religion, and to fear men rather than God. We ought to be zealously affected* always in vindication of these

these things, to interpose with a more than usual warmth, and not through base cowardice, or mistaken modesty, disparage, or disown our cause and Master. Hence it manifestly appears from the dictates of nature, from the judgments of the wisest men, and both the precepts and practices of the best of Christians, that at proper times, and upon just occasions, we safely may, nay, *do well to be angry*. Let us now proceed to shew Secondly, when this passion exceeds its due bounds and limits, and what those circumstances are which render it sinful.

First, This Passion of anger becomes sinful, when 'tis kindled and enflamed without just cause.

Tho' there are some occasions (as we have already proved) which will justify our anger, yet 'twill behove us to be wary, and not exercise this passion upon every frivolous pretence and slight provocation. To

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be *hasty of spirit*, and *soon angry*, are by the wise man esteemed manifest symptoms of *folly*, and tend to evil. To indulge this passion at every trifle that offers, is to draw our selves into snares, and run into sundry absurdities. There are some who will shew more heat and choler at a bare surmise or jealousy, than others shall, or indeed need to do, at the most necessary times, and upon the justest accounts. Every disappointment shall so fret and gall their turbulent spirits, that they shall continually be uneasy to themselves and others. They have no mastery over themselves, but suffer their minds to be discomposed, and like the waves of the sea, rage and foam at every adverse gale. One would lament the unhappy state and condition of those, who for want of due conduct and government, are a perpetual torment to themselves, daily finding or making new matter of disturbance.

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They are ruffled and disquieted at every thing that occurs to them against their desire, or beside their expectation. They consider not the just causes and objects of their displeasure, nay, they often feel their resentment most, who deserve it least. How many are there who are exasperated and incensed against the instruments of any misery, or ill accident that befalls them, when they neither did, nor indeed could act with design or choice, but merely from necessity and compulsion. How many have we seen, who may justly be charged as *Balaam* was with madness, for venting their rage and indignation against senseless brute creatures? 'Twere endless to enumerate the many ridiculous absurdities they are liable to, and frequently guilty of, who are of such waspish tempers, and peevish dispositions, as upon every trifle or pretence to be worked into passion. Indeed the

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principal and mightiest of all our disorders, usually proceeds from mens different opinions and practices. We are often enraged against those, whom we cannot persuade to think, and act as we do; tho' we may as soon expect to see all men of the same stature and complexion, as in all respects to unite and agree in the same things. When therefore we are exasperated upon these already mentioned, or any such like occasions, as we are angry without just cause; so we cannot be without sin.

But, secondly, our anger then becomes sinful when 'tis directed to a wrong object, or mistaken in time or place. Altho' there are such objects as we may and ought to be incensed against; yet when *the foolishness of a man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord,* his rash anger, is turned into blasphemy, and becomes *exceeding sinful*. There are many who complain
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of the equity of *Job's* rule, shall we receive good from the hands of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil. The good they do not deserve they are willing to receive, but the evil they do deserve, they murmur at, and exceedingly rage against.

As whatever we are, or have, is the gift of God, so he may withhold or substract it at his pleasure. For may he not do what he will with his own? Can there be any injury done by him who has an absolute propriety? Yet how many are there, who when any distress or calamity comes upon them, are too apt to charge God foolishly, and even curse him to his face? Every disappointment they meet with shall be a sufficient objection against providence, and God must not at any time displease them, but they must rage against, and censure his proceedings. This is in the highest measure to *provoke God to jealousy*, and this their anger to him

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will cause his *wrathful and fiery indignation against them.*

And as our anger is sinful, when levell'd against God; so is it when directed at those instruments of his, who at any time design, or do us good. This was the *Israelites* crime, when they quarrell'd with *Moses*, *Wherefore hast thou brought us out of the land of Egypt, to kill us, our children, and our cattel with thirst?* This is their sin, who *cannot endure to hear sound doctrine*, but despise the instruction, and even hate the instructor: Who insolently spurn at the command of a parent, the advice of a friend, or the rebukes of a magistrate, and are most angry with those, who in duty and kindness, intend them the greatest good. How many are there, whom we must flatter and sooth, or we incur their displeasure, who (like *Ahab*) *hate the Prophet*, unless he *propheesies smoothly*, and count those their greatest enemies,

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mies, who have the honesty and courage to *tell them the truth*. X Such resentments as these are most sinful and dangerous, as they discourage others from continuing their good offices, and prevent those very means, whereby alone they might expect benefit. Like those unruly patients who cannot bear, but are enraged at the sight of those instruments, which should let out their corruption, and so perish through their obstinacy.

No less guilty are they who vent their anger and rage at improper times, and unsuitable places. There are particular seasons when both prudence and duty oblige us to forbear the exercise of this passion. There are peculiar places consecrated to the Lord, and appropriated to religious uses, where at all times we do ill to be angry, as intrenching upon, and thwarting the *Apoc-*
stle's rule, who commands us to *lift*
up

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up holy hands to God without wrath.
 Yet how many are there to whom it is great pain and grief to have their wounds searched, who cannot endure to be touched in such tender parts, but are exasperated when they hear what they scruple not to practise? If their darling lusts are described and exposed, they imagine the whole drift of the discourse particularly levell'd against them, and therefore rage and glow against the preacher and his doctrine. Neither the dignity of his office, the sacredness of the place, nor the necessary discharge of his duty, are sufficient restraints to their unreasonable resentments. These, as they are mistaken in their objects, time, and place, are justly excluded the number of those who are *angry, and sin not*. And as our anger is sinful, when at any time it is causeless or misplaced:

So, thirdly, is it always criminal, when 'tis immoderate. Tho' the

the cause be never so just and necessary, the time and place suitable and proper, yet the passion is sinful whensoever it exceeds the due bounds and measures. These depend upon various circumstances, and are much easier for every private person in his own case to judge, than to be determined here. That degree of heat which upon some occasions would deservedly be esteemed an undue warmth, may yet upon others, be not only proper, but commendable and necessary, and less than which might be reproached as base lukewarmness, and indifferency. We must always consider the nature, end, and importance of the subject, nor ever presume to go beyond what that can justify. When we are angry with our brother for any offence against God, his neighbours, or our selves, we must proportion it to the nature and merits of his crime. We are not to expostulate

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stultate (where the transgressions are great) in too gentle a manner, *as Eli did with his sons*; nor, like some over-zealous and unwary persons, whilst we reprehend others for the neglect of their duty, forget our own.

There is no cause whatever, not even Religion itself, that can justify excess of passion. They who by violent measures, and with too intemperate an heat pursue its interest, are no true advocates for and friends to it, but very much disparage that they pretend to espouse. And if the best of causes will not excuse immoderate anger, much less will any thing else we are able to alledge; so that 'tis our bounden duty to regulate this passion, and keep a strict rein over our hearts, lest we be transported and provoked into indecent extravagancies. Anger, like fire under due government, is subservient to very excellent and useful purposes, but when once it gets a head,

head, 'twill obtain the mastery, and then we shall be carried *whither we know not*. Immoderate anger is not only in it self sinful, but is productive of many and great evils; it deprives us at once both of reason and temper, and hurries us into extreme folly and madness. Hence 'tis the Psalmist's advice, *Fret not thy self, lest thou be moved to do evil*; let not thy spirit be provoked and inflamed, lest thou *speak unadvisedly with thy lips*. Whensoever we perceive any dangerous symptoms, as the winds to blow fiercely, and the surges arise, we are to take all possible care to prevent a storm; we must endeavour to suppress the first unruly motions of inordinate anger, lest it advance by degrees, and grow at length into madness.

Nor is our anger only sinful when it exceeds in it's measure; but,

Likewise, fourthly and lastly, when 'tis of long continuance. Tho' upon

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on just and necessary occasions some degrees of anger are lawful and commendable, yet upon no pretence whatever can we justify that which is of long duration. *Anger* may sometimes enter into the heart and appear in the countenance of the wisest men, but *it rests only in the bosoms of fools*. An angry thought, word, or action even the best of men may some time or other be liable to, and very easily forgiven; but *a state of enmity* and wrath is utterly inexcusable. The first motions of our passion may be natural and necessary, consequently not imputed to our fault or charge; but if we cherish, or suffer it to harbour in our breasts, we incur the guilt, and shall not escape the punishment.

St. Paul after the words of my text, *Be ye angry, and sin not*, immediately subjoins this remarkable caution, *let not the sun go down upon your wrath,*

wrath. Even an Heathen Philosopher taught his scholars this lesson, that if any difference arose between them in the day, they should peaceably shake hands, and be reconciled by the evening. And surely Christianity, which teaches us to expect forgiveness from God of our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us, should oblige us to a constant disposition and earnest desire of reconciliation and peace. With what face can we address, nay what success can we expect from the throne of grace to our petitions and prayers when we study revenge, and deny that mercy to others we request for our selves? Whilst we retain these secret grudges, and malicious heart-burnings, we shall *bring a curse upon our heads instead of a blessing, out of our own mouths we shall be condemned, and our very prayers (as the Psalmist declares) shall be turned into sin.* So that we
must

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must have a strict guard and care over our thoughts and hearts, that we give no room or harbour for resentments, nor suffer them to settle and abide with us. If at any time they assault and make head against us, let us treat them as enemies, not welcome them as friends. Let them never get the power and dominion over us, but let us keep them under subjection as the ruler did his soldiers, *who could say to one, go, and he goeth, to another, come, and he cometh, to a third, do this, and he doeth it.*

Having considered how far this passion of anger is innocent and commendable, and in what respects it becomes sinful, namely, when 'tis causeless, misplaced, immoderate, or durable; I shall now add a few general directions to regulate this passion.

And first, Let us consider the bent and propensity of our inclinations,

tions, and be cautious how at any time we give way to our resentments. If we find our selves thro' nature or custom so sanguine and testy as very easily to be worked into extravagant heats, we should endeavour to avoid all tendencies to all occasions of passion; we should carefully shun such manner of dyet, such conversation, employment, or whatever other means we perceive serve to kindle or ferment this humour; we should strike at the very foundation, suppress the first motions, stifle every spark or latent ember, which otherwise might spread and grow into a flame. The seeds of all mischief are planted early, and accordingly as they are cherished or neglected they will either ripen or decay. If we unwarily indulge the first risings of any passion, 'twill by degrees gain ground, and we shall scarce be able to prevent it's destructive consequences.

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sequences. 'Tis our interest and duty and will prove always a discreet and proper method to keep a strict rein over our wills and passions. 'Tis not safe to allow them their free exercise, nor permit them to make too frequent excursions, lest in time they abuse their liberty, and grow too predominant. Whenever we find our inclinations give way, and our resentments too easily and pow'rfully beset us, we must be sure to summon all our forces, exert our utmost skill, and not cease, till we have gained the mastery. If we come to a parley, and grant them present allowances with design of restraining and governing them for the future, they will soon triumph and prevail, and *lead us captive at their wills*. Secondly, Let us seriously and frequently consider the great deformity, folly, guilt and danger of immoderate anger. How it tyrannizes over the mind and absolute

olutely deprives the man both of his reason and senses. How it obstructs all his faculties, so that he has no ears to hear, no judgment to distinguish the evil from the good, nor will he chuse the one, and refuse the other : How it disorders his spirits, and distorts his countenance, making him act like a lunatick, and look like a monster : What ridiculous follies and absurdities it exposes him to, such as upon serious reflection, and in his cool senses he would even blush to own : How it unmans and degrades his nature, and instead of being only *a little lower than the Angels*, even levels him with the brutes : How it prostitutes his character, disgraces his profession, and incapacitates him for even private, much more publick employments : What monstrous wickedness, and horrible guilt both against God, his neighbour, and himself, it exposes him to : What

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senseless imprecations, prophane oaths, and outrageous blasphemies it makes him utter: What unjust slander, calumny and detraction, what base and perfidious violation of secrets 'tis the occasion of: In a word, What extreme hazard both of body and soul it exposes him to: How it deforms, disables and consumes the one, discomposes, endangers and betrays the other.

To reflect seriously how *the furious man aboundeth with transgression*, and what desperate adventures he is hurried into, cannot but move us to compassionate and pity, and make us carefully endeavour to avoid his fate. The fear of contracting so much guilt, and incurring such great evils, should make us shun all occasions, all approaches to it. Nay, the many, and even endless, dangers he is exposed to should teach us so much prudence, as to keep a constant watch and
guard

guard over our passions. Hence the wise man observes, that *the man of great wrath is continually deserving and suffering punishment, and if you deliver him once, yet you must do it again.* If he has repaired the damages of one fit by another, he soon contracts more; nay, often by some minutes of fury, creates a subject of long repentance. The fatal effects and unhappy consequences whereof, would we soberly and frequently reflect on, we should not hastily resent every supposed affront, nor, even upon real injuries receiv'd, rashly engage in duels, to the apparent hazard both of our temporal and eternal welfare. Indeed, from passions so easily worked up and exasperated to revenge, as our British constitutions are too well known to be, from mistaken notions of honour too generally approved, and too unreasonably prosecuted, and laws, however prudently designed,

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yet so variously eluded, and so very rarely executed for offences of this kind, what disorders and destructions have we not heard of and seen? what may we not yearly, nay, daily dread? Past calamities if heartily lamented and duly improved, must make us wise for the future; and sure the loss of so many, and such distinguished subjects, for which *our land now mourns* from so unchristian a practice, will oblige us to consider of, and enforce what may at length prove an effectual remedy. We are fond of foreign fashions, and delight to imitate foreign countries in things ridiculous and useless. Oh may we consult their schemes, and follow their rules in some things, at least, that are commendable and useful! No pretended punctilio of honour, no verbal affront, nor the greatest injury that can possibly be offered, should ever raise our passions and resentments so high, as to
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put us upon that rash and desperate adventure of shipwrecking at once all our present and our future happiness. The wise man observes, *that he who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city;* and tho' fashion and custom may unhappily have depraved the notions of some, yet, in the general esteem of the wise and virtuous, 'twill prove more glorious and honourable, as well as more religious and christian to suppress and conquer, than give way to our resentments. So that if we are wise for our selves, have any regard to our peace, any love for our lives, or any value for our souls, we shall continually strive to avoid immoderate anger, which is destructive of all. But, thirdly and lastly, Since all our endeavours will be vain and ineffectual without the concurrent assistance of divine grace;

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Let us not cease to implore God in whose hands are our hearts and passions, so to direct, dispose and govern them as may best serve the ends of his glory, and our own eternal happiness. We must acknowledge that *'tis he who stills the raging waves of the sea, who alone can rule this madness of the people.* 'Tis labouring in vain, and striving against the stream to pretend to govern them with our utmost efforts, and vigorous application. 'Tis *trusting to a broken reed* to rely solely upon our own strength, which must needs disappoint us. But *the divine grace is sufficient for us, our weakness is supported by the strength it imparts,* and therefore however difficult the work may seem, or hazardous the issue; yet this is our consolation, rejoicing and triumph, that *we can do all things through Christ that strengthens us.* Let it then be our constant care and practice

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ctice, as 'tis our interest and duty, to implore the divine grace, so to regulate this passion, that we may always exercise it upon proper objects, in a just cause, and at proper times and places; but that we never be provoked to extravagant indecencies, nor at any time *suffer the Sun to go down upon our wrath.*

Thus shall we obey the Apostle's rule, enjoy the peace and comfort of it here, and the reward of it hereafter.



S E R.



SERMON VI.

Preach'd at the

ROYAL-CHAPEL

At St. JAMES's 1712.

Pfal. 42. ver. 11.

*Why art thou cast down, O my
soul? and why art thou dis-
quieted within me? hope thou
in God.*



IS the usual artifice of
Satan, whose snares and
devices we are not igno-
rant of, to consult the
various tempers and passions of men,
to

to apply proper baits to their respective appetites, the more successfully to betray them into misery and ruin. Now presumption and despair are the dangerous extremes, the two fatal rocks, which this grand enemy of our souls continually contrives, endeavours, and hopes to make us shipwreck upon. An overweening conceit of our own sufficiency, that we are already good enough, and need be no better, exposes us to the one, the sad and gloomy reflection on our corruptions and sins, that we are too far gone to repent or reform, plunges us into the other, and both are equally destructive of our spiritual welfare, both tend to enlarge and advance the interests, the dominion, and the power of darkness. The former of these I shall not here insist on; wholly endeavouring to raise the drooping spirits of those, whose prevailing fears are too apt to disturb them in, and discourage

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rage them from the due discharge of their duty. And to every such dejected soul, we may justly and comfortably apply the words of my text, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God.*

From which words I shall at present consider some of those scruples, troubles and fears, which even good men are disturbed with from the irregularities of their thoughts, and imperfections of their practices, endeavouring to apply a cure and remedy for, or at least, afford some ease and relief under them.

As to the former, the irregularities of their thoughts, we may hear them complain of frequent interruptions, occasion'd by these, both in their temporal and spiritual concerns. That power and privilege of thinking and reflecting, whereby we differ from, and excel the inferior part of the creation, how often
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are they the causes of misery and disquiet, and what we value as our best and greatest happiness, we feel and lament as our severest torment. Beasts have indeed a sensation of pain, but then they have no fears; nay, the utmost they can possibly feel, are present sufferings. Whereas man, by his more refin'd sense, and enlarg'd capacity, is often uneasy at past, affected with present, and suspicious and jealous of future evils.

In every thing we attempt, we are interrupted and perplexed with various impressions and distractions of mind. The most studious scholar cannot always be intent, and keep close to those subjects he endeavours to advance in. Even trifles will sometimes amuse his most settled thoughts, and divert him from what he aimed and determined to prosecute. The most cautious men in business, and most regular in their accounts, are not always so
2 exact,

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exact, but through the confusion of their minds in the multiplicity of their affairs, must meet with sundry interruptions, and various disappointments. Nay, there is nothing we design or do, through the whole course of our lives, to which this unsteadiness and dispersion of thought may not sometimes be an hindrance.

But the things that good men most lament and complain of, and which I chiefly design to enlarge on, are those distractions they perceive in their private meditations, and more publick worship, which accompany them in their closets, and disturb them at church. There are many who cannot attend any religious exercises with that steadiness and alacrity, as they do their secular employments. They have a strange flatness on their minds, and drowsiness on their spirits; their souls are *possessed with* such a spiritual *infirmity*, that they cannot often raise

raise them up to God, and heavenly meditations. Even in their most private retirements, when there are no trifles to divert, or other snares to corrupt and draw off their minds, yet their thoughts and affections unaccountably rove, and very rarely continue long in any serious posture. Now if these proceed from themselves, from that want of consideration and value they ought to have for such inestimable privileges; if they do not rightly *savour the things that be of God*, but make the performance of such sacrifices, rather matters of custom than conscience and duty; if they are indifferent about the manner, and regardless of the ends and consequences of these things, no wonder that they are cold and unaffected at such exercises, nor can they ever expect to reap comfort or profit from them, till their minds are better disposed, and their behaviour more reformed.

But

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But I shall no otherwise at present apply my self to such, than by admonishing and entreating them timely to repent of their folly, and beware of their danger.

There are those who more deserve our pity and care, such as both desire and endeavour to have their minds compos'd at all the offices of devotion, and profitably employ their thoughts; yet to their great sorrow and concern, too generally fall short of their wishes, and fail in their attempts. Even the best of men are not wholly exempt from all wandrings of thought, neither in their private nor publick addresses to God. Tho' they seriously and earnestly set about their duty, and are quicken'd by all proper and preparatory motives, yet vain, ridiculous, and sometimes indecent fancies will unaccountably start up in their minds, and disturb, and even unhallow their most spiritual

tual sacrifices. As the solitude of a wilderness was no sufficient defence to our Saviour against temptation; so neither will the privacy of a closet be a security to us. Our passions and affections accompany us there as well as in publick, and where these are present, the grand enemy of our souls cannot possibly want matter to employ himself upon, nor some hopes of *succeeding in his Attempts*. Even while we are collecting our thoughts, and summoning all our actions before the bar of our consciences, in order to glorify God for the good, and implore his pardon for the bad; when we are actually preparing for those solemn duties the publick Prayers of the Church, the hearing of the word, and the devout reception of the blessed Sacrament it self; even then we often fail of that intenseness of thought, and entire freedom from distraction,

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which we might fondly promise ourselves, or would gladly experience. Nay, when we approach the house of God, and enter his courts with the most holy reverence, neither the dignity of the place, the awfulness of the Majesty, nor importance of the subjects, however powerful and proper, do really prove effectual and sufficient means to prevent all distractions.

I do not here speak of those, who by a careless behaviour, irreverent gestures, or unnecessary returns of civility, invite and occasion, but of those who earnestly strive against, and yet cannot avoid them. For even these, whilst they carry about them their *earthly tabernacles which press down the soul*, and obstruct its good motions, are not wholly exempt, but more or less subject to such frailties and infirmities. Besides we have suggestions from without, as well as corruptions from within, which are very frequently
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and artfully applyed to frustrate our devotion. When the *sons of God* come to present themselves before the Lord, *Satan* will officiously intrude, and endeavour, as far as in him lyes, to interrupt and molest them. As immediately after his Baptism, and the effusions of the Holy Spirit he formerly attack'd our blessed Lord: so in the midst of God's temple, in the most solemn and spiritual ordinances, he is busy about us, and labours most to regain those he is in greatest danger of losing.

Now that those who are cast down, and disquieted by such unhappy distractions, might find comfort and relief, we may observe, that the irregularities of our thoughts are things we cannot always account for; that they are sometimes lawless and unconfined in their motions, like *winds that blow where they list*, and we cannot tell whence they come, or whither they go. They depend ve-

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ry much on the temperament of the body, and the various dispositions and constitutions of men.

There are some who from a natural heat and vivacity of spirit, perform every thing they do with sprightliness and vigour; they are warm and active in *business*, eager on pleasure, and fearless of danger. There are others of a more sedate, cool and melancholy temper, who are continually possess'd with doubts, scruples and fears, who always act upon the reserve, and proceed with mighty wariness and distrust in every thing they attempt. Now no wonder if men of such different dispositions shew a different behaviour in religious and spiritual, as well as temporal concerns. But can we think *God who judges not by appearance, but judges righteous judgment*, will not have a greater regard and value for the sincerity of our hearts, than the warmth of our affections? Nay,
can

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can we in reason and equity believe, or even modestly declare, that he who made us, will charge us with those weaknesses which are necessary to our natures, and which 'twas beyond our power either to remedy or prevent?

We readily allow what the Apostle asserts, that *'tis good to be zealously affected always in a good thing*, and that such happy constitutions as are visibly raised and elevated in all the offices of devotion, perform a service most acceptable to God, and most delightful to themselves. But we cannot forget what he hath also expressly promised and declared, that *he will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax*; that provided we bring honest hearts, sincere desires, and do our best endeavours, he will kindly accept our sacrifices, tho' not expressed in the most affectionate strain, nor presented in the most becoming manner.

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To lay too great a stress on these, would be to value mens passions above their principles, and prefer what is only the ornament of Religion before the essence and power of it.

Those outward signs of devotion which affect the eye, are not worthy to be compared with those inward graces and qualities that adorn the soul. They who have the former without the latter, are only *zealously affected, but not well*; they may have the shew and shadow of religion, but want the substance, which is absolutely necessary to please God, and profit themselves. Indeed many of the best Christians are not always the most sanguine; they make up in steadiness what they want in sprightliness; and we cannot deny but that a settled composed frame of spirit, and awful behaviour in the presence of God and use of his holy ordinances, are more acceptable

table to him, than any sudden raptures of piety, or high fallies of devotion.

Nay even those who do sometimes feel a pleasing lightfomeness of mind in the exercises of piety and religious meditations, do not so at all times. A melancholy vapour, or sudden gloominess of thought may overcast their souls, deject their spirits and cloud their brightest intervals. We have all affections and passions which are more or less disordered with outward calamities, and the apprehension of external evils. Whilst we abide in these earthly tabernacles, *flesh and blood will war against the spirit*, obstruct its good motions, and intercept its most comfortable and delightful prospects. But *let not our hearts be troubled*, neither let us give way to melancholy and uneasie fears from those irregular motions and deviations of our thoughts, which are

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rather our imperfections than sins; and if not indulged but resisted, may be more justly stiled our misfortunes than our faults. They are designed to humble our souls by discovering our infirmities, but ought by no means to discourage us from the performance of, or perseverance in our duty. We may by our prayers and endeavours expect in some measure to remedy, but not wholly to remove them. For they proceed from the union of our souls with earthly bodies, and that original corruption, which is inseparable from our natures.

As to those blasphemous thoughts and indecent fancies which some sincere, but melancholy persons both at their private and publick devotion are unhappily and unaccountably disturbed with, these deserve our consideration, and need our pity and concern to prevent their consequent danger. When their fears arising
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from such thoughts wrought up by an unhappy complexion and the evil suggestions of *Satan* pursue and torment them, *their burden* (like *Cain's*) *must be heavier than they can bear*. On such we ought to have *compassion*, seasonably to administer all the comfort we are capable of, lest they should *be swallowed up with over-much sorrow*, and hopeless of relief plunge themselves into despair.

Now 'twould very much abate the extremity of their grief, were they but fully convinced of the true rise and consequences of these unhappy thoughts: That they usually proceed from some indisposition of their bodies, disordering their minds, which cast a gloominess over their souls deject and damp their spirits, and make them apprehend things in a worse light than really they are: That they have an enemy at hand watching all opportunities to scatter tares among the
corn,

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corn, and suggest the vilest thoughts, even while they are employed upon the best actions: That they often tend to make them strict examiners of their former lives, and more cautious and circumspect in their future behaviour: That such are not usually exposed to those snares and temptations which too easily beset and beguile others, but being naturally timorous and jealous of guilt, rarely commit any deliberate sin, or enormous crime. I say, did they impartially consider both the causes and fruits, whence they come, and whither they tend, they would not perceive sufficient grounds for such unreasonable dejection. Nay, would they with any impartiality reflect on the attributes of God, they could not continue to indulge such groundless jealousies, and uneasy despondencies. For is he not declared to *be a Father of mercies, and God of all comforts*, and will he

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he not favourably behold and seasonably relieve the distresses and fears of such sincere, but disconsolate Christians? *Is he not righteous in all his ways, and just in his judgments,* and will he punish men for those disorders of the mind which proceed from the body, for those vain or impious thoughts which they always abhor, but cannot often prevent? Should he *be so severe as to mark every thing* such think amiss in those gloomy hours, and in *that bitterness of soul* they at some times feel, *who could be able to abide it?* Is he not a God too of exact veracity and truth, and has he not expressly promised to *bind up the broken-hearted,* and not to *suffer such to be tempted above what they are able,* but either to deliver them out of their troubles, or comfort them in, and support them under them? So that every true Christian may thus triumph with the Psalmist, *In God's word*

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word will I rejoyce, in the Lord's word will I comfort me ; yea, in God I have put my trust, and will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

The imperfect systems of Philosophy, the recreations of the mind, and exercises of the body, may sometimes divert, but cannot always prevent or cure melancholy. The most sovereign antidote against this, is affiance in God ; *when the heart is in heaviness, it should think upon God ;* and to every one who, from the irregularities of his thoughts, thus complains and expostulates, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul ? and why art thou disquieted within me ?* the remedy and answer are ready, *hope thou in God.*

Having considered and relieved those scruples and fears which some conscientious, but melancholy Christians are unhappily disturbed with from the irregularities of their thoughts ; I proceed now to examine,

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mine, to ease, and answer such as arise from the imperfections of their practices. That every one who lives has abundant reason to lament what he daily, nay hourly feels, that original corruption, which, like a leprosie, taints and overspreads the whole man, is universally acknowledged. That none, not even the best and most circumspect on earth, can with truth or equity declare, that *he is perfectly clean*, free from these natural, or even voluntary defects, is as infallibly certain. Now such considerations as these may serve to humble, but ought not to discourage us in our Christian warfare. For tho' we freely acknowledge and bewail our own unworthiness, and *that we are not sufficient of our selves to do any thing as of our selves, yet our sufficiency is of God, and we believe we can do all things, both acceptably and perfectly, through Christ that strengthens us.*

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There are some well-disposed, but melancholy Christians, who from those many frailties and corruptions which they continually labour to conquer, but cannot wholly suppress, from the weakness of their most serious and deliberate resolutions, and the defects and imperfections even of the best of their works, grow uneasie and dejected about the state of their souls, the acceptableness of their obedience, and efficacy of their repentance, conclude that they are unworthy of the divine favour here, and shall have no title to, or interest in it hereafter. Now such we ought to treat very affectionately and tenderly, to *draw them with the cords* of gentleness and compassion, and convince them that their condition is much safer and better than their fearful apprehensions represent and make it. The corruptions of our first parents are entailed on their posterity,

sterity, and we must cease to be men, to be entirely exempt from frailties and infirmities. 'Tis our duty to resist and oppose them by our most constant endeavours, and earnest prayers, but in vain do we expect or hope wholly to subdue them. Time and conflict may keep them within bounds, and under tolerable subjection, but cannot totally remove them. And can we justly complain, or ought to be dejected at what God hath made thus necessary to our natures? We might as reasonably except against the inferiority of our condition, and take upon us to resent, that we were not Angels, but Men.

But let not us be discouraged, or overmuch troubled at these necessary infirmities, *which even good men may fall into seven times a day, and for ought we know, seventy times seven; for who can tell, in these respects, how oft he offendeth?* Sufficient therefore

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fore for these natural frailties, these involuntary failings, is that supplication of *David*, *O cleanse thou me from my secret faults.*

As to the weakness and instability of those who make frequent good purposes, but fall short in performances; their case, tho' somewhat dangerous, is yet not hopeless and desperate. For while we live in the world, there will never cease to be a mighty contest and struggle between the flesh and the spirit, *the law in our members, and the law of Christ*; and the former even with serious and well affected men, will sometimes prevail to the detriment of the latter. However, when sensible of these, they timely seek to renew them by a sincere repentance, and take care to make amends for former breaches, by their future obedience, they shall not fail to be restored to the divine mercy and favour, and *their sins*, through the
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precious blood and infinite merits of Christ *shall be blotted out*. So that we ought not to despond, to be cast down and disquieted, tho' we have seriously and frequently resolved in vain; but lamenting what's past, should endeavour to be more cautious and constant for the future.

But the things which chiefly deject pious, but melancholy persons, are the defects and imperfections even of the best of their works. They frequently fast and pray, but fear they do neither of them in that regular and acceptable manner, as *to obtain the end of their hopes, the salvation of their souls*. They know *when they have done their best, they are but unprofitable Servants*, and they are sensible in what various respects they fall short of that. They are apt to suspect the motives and principles of their most virtuous actions, and judge their obedience to proceed

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ceed rather from a mere servile fear, than a true filial love. Their original corruption, and actual transgressions, render them unworthy of the divine love and favour, and they can have no foundation from their own merits, to plead room for mercy. Indeed were the best of men to rest on their own inherent righteousness and perfection of their good works, they must *trust to broken reeds*, which would most certainly fail them. For neither our election, redemption, justification, or salvation, result from any worthiness we have in our selves, but from the free grace and goodness of God, through *Jesus Christ*. This is the Anchor of our hope, through which our very *weakness is made strength*, and all our imperfections are accepted as perfect. This is the true *fountain of living waters*, which supports our spirits, sustains our souls, and continues *springing up to everlasting life*; and they who seek
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or chuse any other refuge, only *hew out unto themselves broken cisterns, which can hold no water.* The best and holiest of men, in their gloomiest hours, and under the most melancholy reflections, have taken sanctuary here; and in *the multitude of the sorrows they had in their hearts, these comforts have refreshed their souls.* The Father of mercies, and God of all comforts, will not *despise, or reject the broken hearted,* but make gracious allowances for human frailties, and pity every infirm, if sincere Christian. He *treasures up our sighs, puts our tears into his bottle,* and for all we endure or suffer here, will *reward us in the end seven fold into our bosom.* Our imperfect fasts, endeavours, and prayers, will not be forgotten, and the all-sufficiency of Christ's merits can supply and fulfil whatsoever is weak or wanting in us. When our *hearts begin to fail us because of our infirmities,* and we

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are sinking into a damp fit of melancholy and despair, let us turn the stream of our thoughts, and *fix them upon God*, beseeching him to shew *the light of his countenance*, and *we shall be whole*. All sincere, humble, and penitent persons, need *not be cast down*, and inwardly disquieted, but *may be of good cheer*, and hope through Christ, that *their sins will be forgiven*. They cannot reflect on the Attributes of God, but they must dart such beams of light and comfort into their souls, as shall disperse and dispel all the clouds of melancholy. When they consider his most darling attribute, nay, his very nature and property, which are always to have mercy, that he is *full of compassion*, *abundant in goodness*, and infinitely gracious; such meditations must raise and refresh their drooping spirits, and *from the vale of gloominess and misery, lead them forth beside the waters of comfort*. For

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we may thus argue with our selves;
If God causeth his *rain to descend, and*
his sun to shine on the evil and the
good, the just and unjust: If his general mercies are extended to the proud, the hypocritical and obstinate, surely his peculiar *mercy* will be over the humble, the sincerely sorrowful and repenting sinner. Nay, if we who are but creatures, often pity the weaknesses, excuse the faults, and forgive the trespasses of our offending brethren; much more will the Creator, our heavenly Father, compassionate the infirmities, pardon the failings, and grant the requests of his weak and contrite children.

As justly may we argue from the veracity of God, that assurance we have in the completion of his promises revealed to us in Scripture, to the comfort of dejected, if returning sinners. We are all pathetically exhorted to repent us of our sins.
Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways.

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Nay they who are grieved and wearied with the burden of their sins, are earnestly invited by Christ to duty and obedience: *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden with the promise of acceptance and refreshment, and I will give you rest.* Now God is not slack concerning his promises, as some men count slackness; his covenant will he not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips. Nay, to confirm the stability of his counsel, he hath assured us by oath, that, by two such immutable things, wherein 'tis impossible that God should lie, we might have strong consolation. I farther add, that comfort may be drawn even from the justice of God, to all dejected Penitents. For Christ hath born our infirmities, and carried our sorrows, he hath suffered in our stead, and made full satisfaction, so that the debt is discharged, and we are released: Nay, tho' we contract anew, he hath promised to restore

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us whensoever we repent ; so, that if we are so kind to our selves, as to acknowledge and bewail, he will be so *faithful and just* as to *forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

What I have here urged to comfort the contrite and penitent, will not, I hope, be so unwarily applied, as to encourage obstinate and impenitent sinners ; *their damnation is just*, from continually despising and abusing the gracious overtures of mercy ; *they are vessels fitted for destruction*, and only *treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath.* I have altogether confined this discourse to those who have a due sense of Religion, are concerned and sorry for their sins, sincerely desire, and earnestly endeavour to forsake and avoid them ; but being clouded with melancholy, and overwhelmed with fears, are discouraged and dejected ; And such

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weak and dispirited Christians are the properest objects of our compassion, deserve best, and need most such advantagious comforts. Such as these the gracious mercies of God, and merits of Christ were chiefly designed for, and which, if seasonably and rightly applied, will comfort their hearts, and *give rest to their souls.*

From what has hitherto been urged, give me leave to infer, that if the thoughts of our hearts, and actions of our lives, have so great an influence on our present peace and future happiness, 'tis our highest interest and duty constantly to observe, and duely to regulate these: We should always endeavour to exercise our thoughts on innocent, rational, and useful subjects, should check and suppress all inordinate sallies, all irregular motions, and keep them within the bounds of prudence and decency. Our minds are of an
active

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active and sprightly nature, if they are not employed on objects that are good, they must have recourse to those that are trifling, ridiculous, or evil. 'Tis our highest concern, and ought to be our principal care *to keep our hearts with all diligence, for out of them are the issues of life.* Nay, did we duly value, we should frequently exercise our minds, and delight to dwell on religious meditations, our blessed Saviour assuring us, that *where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also.* We should keep our thoughts as intent and composed as we can at all the offices of devotion, whether in publick or private, not doubting but God will make gracious allowances for our various infirmities.

But more especially must we consider and take care of our actions, that we live innocently and usefully, and so as becomes *those who profess the Gospel of Christ*: That we act
upon

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upon sincere and religious principles, propose honest and honourable ends, and prosecute those ends by fair and regular means, and in a becoming manner : That neither the terrors nor the flatteries of the world draw us off from obedience, but that we be always fearful of committing any known sin, or of omitting any known duty.

In short, Let us persevere in the conscientious performance of our honest callings and religious exercises, which are the most probable means to make us easie in our circumstances, and composed in our minds ; and if disorders should arise from the weakness of our constitutions, or prevalency of our fears, let us fix our hearts and hopes upon God, who will deliver us from, strengthen us under, or abundantly reward us for all our troubles. Hither therefore, *O ye sons and daughters of affliction*, ye must

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must flee for succour: *Hope in the Lord, and abide patiently upon him, and he will in his due time strengthen your minds, support your spirits, and deliver you out of all your fears: Put your trust in his mercy, and these black clouds will disperse and vanish, and your hearts will be joyful in his salvation: Have David's hope, and in the end you will have his confidence and crown of rejoicing; you will gratefully acknowledge, adore and praise him, who is the health of your countenance and your God. When your flesh and your hearts fail, he will be your strength and your portion for ever. He will guide you with his counsel, and afterward receive you into glory. I shall conclude all with the petition in our excellent Collect.*

Grant we beseech thee, merciful Lord, to thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve thee with a quiet mind, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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SERMON VII.

Preach'd at the

ROYAL-CHAPEL

At St. *JAMES*'s 1712.

Luk. chap. 1. ver. 46, 47.

*My soul doth magnifie the Lord,
and my spirit hath rejoiced in
God my Saviour.*



THESE are the words of
a devout and rapturous
soul, at tidings most sur-
prizingly glorious on an
occasion universally triumphant. So
distinguishing a favour, so inestima-
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ble a privilege as conceiving in her womb the Saviour of the world, and being an instrument of the greatest blessing and importance to mankind could not long lie concealed, and pent up in her heart; *the fire soon kindled*, the holy fervours took flame, and made her break forth into expressions full of transport and joy. Tho' from the nature of her birth, and manner of her life, she could not much be experienced in the art of composing; yet *her heart enditing so good a matter, her tongue became the pen of a ready writer*, and by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost assisting the fruit of her lips, as well as that of her womb, the Christian Church is furnished with a most excellent Hymn, full of grace and beauty through all its parts, wisely appropriated to our daily service, and the beginning of which, I have made choice of for the subject of my present

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sent discourse, *My soul doth magnifie the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.* From which words I shall, First, explain the nature, prove the reasonableness, and necessity, and display the comforts and advantages of a true spiritual joy. Secondly, I shall discover the particular happy occasion of this virgin's joy, which, in some respects, was peculiar to her, but in it's principal end and design universal to the world. And then, Thirdly and Lastly, shall urge our consequent obligations to gratitude and obedience for this so great, so extensive a blessing.

First then, I am to explain the nature, prove the reasonableness, and necessity, and display the comforts and advantages of a true spiritual joy.

'Tis neither the business nor design of religion to extirpate our passions, but to fix them upon proper

per objects, to keep them within their just and regular measures. Love, and hatred, hope, and fear, joy, and sorrow, have their different uses, and wise ends, and by the conduct of reason, and assistance of grace, are capable of great and various improvements. Indeed one of the principal parts of a Christian's duty consists in the exercise of joy, in the work of praise and thanksgiving. Nay, there will never be wanting suitable motives and proper grounds for the employment of this passion, whose duration is of the same date even with eternity itself,

If we desire to distinguish the various sorts of joy, and thence enquire how this spiritual differs from that which is natural and carnal, we may readily reply in its objects, and effects. Those persons or things we greatly love and value, we proportionably rejoyce at the success,
or

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or near approach of. If the rules of friendship require us to seek, to promote, and rejoyce in one anothers good; the precepts of Christianity do by no means detract from, but enhance the obligation. The increase of virtue, or decay of vice, the presence of some moral good, or removal of some deadly evil, are very suitable subjects for a true spiritual joy to exercise itself upon. The true Christian's *heart is fixed upon God* and spiritual objects; he takes the greatest pleasure and complacency both in the practice and promotion of piety. *All his delight is upon the saints that are in the earth, and upon such as excel in virtue;* nor can there be any thing the subject of his praise or occasion of his joy that is either in itself, or in its consequence sinful. Hence 'tis manifestly distinguish'd from natural joy, which proceeds rather from vanities and trifles, than religious
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concerns ; but it principally and more especially differs from carnal joy, which is the direct reverse as taking pleasure both in committing and countenancing iniquity.

Nor are these only distinguished from each other by their objects, but in their effects. Spiritual joy serves to quicken and promote sundry excellent duties. It raises our devotion, inspires us with a sincere and generous complacency at the prosperous state of others, and improves our own. Whereas unseasonable, intemperate mirth, or carnal joys tend to dishonour God, to disturb our neighbours, and expose our selves. As we judge of a tree by the nature of its fruit, so we may of spiritual and worldly joys, they are discovered in their tendencies, and known by their effects.

The reasonableness and comeliness of rejoicing in the Lord, sure

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none can dispute who give themselves leisure to reflect on his nature or his works. If the divine presence, but partly discerned by Moses, darted such glittering rays, that *Aaron and his people were not able to behold him, till he had cast a veil over his countenance*, how transcendently glorious must be the whole discovery? The least glimpse of the divine nature, beauty, and perfections extorts our wonder, attracts our love, and excites our joy. *We who see only through a glass darkly* have sufficient grounds and motives to delight and rejoyce in the glory of the divine attributes. But 'tis not so much the excellency of his nature, as goodness of his works, that endears him to our afflictions, and recommends him to our joy. 'Twas God that created us out of nothing, *by whom we live, move, and have our beings*, through whose providence *we have been holden up ever since*

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since we were born, and who, we trust,
will be our guide, even unto death.
'Twas Christ who redeemed us when
we were worse than nothing, who,
like a good shepherd, laid down his
life for the sheep of his pasture. 'Tis
therefore very meet and right that
every true Christian should at all
times break forth into joy, and with
the blessed virgin in my text, tri-
umphantly sing, *My soul doth magni-
fie the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoy-
ced in God my Saviour.* The wise man
condemns all light and intemperate
joys; he says of laughter that it is
mad, and of mirth, what good doth it?
But true spiritual joy is both reason-
able in its nature, and necessary in
its use, such as reason recommends,
and religion requires. Tho' the
old Law was delivered with earth-
quakes, thundrings, and other cir-
cumstances of terror; yet the Gospel
was ushered in with universal joy,
and seraphick melody. The Chri-
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Christian sabbath is a glorious festival; *the fruit of the spirit is joy*, and we are moved and commanded in sundry places of scripture, *to rejoyce in the Lord*. God requires from his people a willing mind, and chearful obedience, that none should grudgingly move, and be dragged into his courts like an ox to the slaughter, but that all *should serve the Lord with gladness, and come before his presence with a song*. The holy Psalmist prescribes as well joy as fear in the worship of God; *Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoyce unto him with trembling*; whereby he recommends the use, nay proves the necessity both of chearfulness and wariness in religious offices, since we could scarce discharge our duty so wisely as we ought without the latter, nor so acceptably without the former. Indeed joy is so essential a part of the Christian sacrifice, that without this our oblations

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tions are imperfect, our worship languid, and our devotion dead. The holy Eucharist, that most concerning point, and important duty, is a feast of joy and thanksgiving, and therefore they who always celebrate this with tears in their eyes, and dejected countenances, seem to forget the nature of so comfortable an ordinance. Spiritual joy is the very life of religion, is as necessary to the soul, as breath and motion to the body. 'Tis the heart God requires and values, *he loves a chearful giver*, and such as delight in the knowledge and exercise of his laws. The Cynick and the Churl are the reverse of the Christian, whose religion recommends and enjoins good humour and chearfulness. He is taught to be easie in his mind, obliging in his behaviour, and not to suffer the greatest disappointments to disorder his spirits, and sour his temper, but still *to rejoyce in the*

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Lord, and joy in the God of his salvation.

Nor are the comforts and advantages of this spiritual joy less apparent or demonstrative, than its reasonableness and necessity. Obedience and delight, our pleasure and our duty, if rightly considered, are inseparable companions. They who look only into the gloomy side of religion, who make it consist in moroseness and austerity, through want of knowledge and experience mistake its nature, or through enmity misrepresent and abuse it. The holy scriptures recommend it in a quite different character, assuring us, that *its ways are ways of pleasantness*, that *the statutes of the Lord rejoyce the heart*, and that the *service of God* is no unreasonable task, but *perfect freedom*. The joy that results from the exercises of religion, and due discharge of our duty, is such as neither the *world* can give, nor
take

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take away from us. The peace which flows from an uncorrupt heart, and a quiet conscience, passeth all understanding, and is more lively felt than can be described. Spiritual joy gives a relish to the mind, and entertainment to the soul, far beyond any worldly or sensual enjoyments; 'tis sweeter than hony, and the hony-comb, it exhilarates our spirits, and rejoices our hearts more than if our corn, and wine, and oil had increased. We need only invite men to taste and see how good and gracious the Lord is, to distinguish the beauty, and relish the pleasure of holiness, to endear it to their affections, and engage them to the practice. They only savour the things that be of God, who, in holy rapture and zeal, cry out with the Psalmist, Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth I desire in comparison of thee? They are strangers to the delights of righteousness, joy,

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and peace in the Holy Ghost, who do not most eagerly desire, passionately affect, and chearfully enjoy them.

Spiritual joy is in sundry respects superior to worldly, is attended with such advantages as not to need so weak, so inglorious a foil. This *descends from above*, from God the fountain of joy, and consists in the exercises of faith, hope, contemplation, and love. Whereas the other has no higher extract than earth, no better objects than the trifling vanities of the world, and ignoble pleasures of sense. Spiritual joy clears and quickens all our faculties, enlightens our understandings, smooths and supplies our wills, and exalts our affections; But worldly and sensual joy clouds and clogs the brain, corrupts the heart, and so disorders the whole man, that he is neither capable of judging, chusing, nor acting as he ought. Spiritual joy
fatiates

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fatigates the mind, replenishes and fills our most enlarged capacities. Whereas worldly joy presents us with shadows, instead of substances, amuses our senses with imaginary varieties of satisfaction and pleasure, which all vanish in the fruition. If *desire accomplished is sweet to the soul*, how transporting must be that joy, which gratifies our best inclinations, and most ardent wishes? How vain and delusive that, which raises our hopes, and enflames our desires, but never answers either.

We may farther add, that spiritual joy is both comely in its appearance, and durable in its continuance. It *do's not behave it self unseemly*, nor is indecent or irregular in its flights and motions. 'Tis not fickle and precarious, continually ebbing and flowing, but settled and constant, (like its divine Author) *subject to no variableness, or shadow of turning*. Whereas worldly joy has its
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fits and raptures, transports us beyond the bounds of reason and decency, and is rather madness than mirth. It keeps our minds in a wavering and fluctuating condition, sometimes it unreasonably exalts, and at others as unaccountably disappoints. It may strike our fancies, and regale our senses for a while; but like the blaze of stubble, or flashes of lightning, 'twill immediately expire. It has no principle whereon to ground any solid contentment, no foundation to support any durable comfort, or substantial pleasure. So low, so contemptible are all earthly comforts and advantages, when compared with spiritual.

Nay, worldly and sensual joy, all, even the most wicked, are capable of, and best qualified for; but none but the sincerely good and vertuous can truly relish, and be partakers of spiritual. This is the daily exercise and
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constant employment, not only of pious men on earth, but even of Angels in heaven. This is a lesson we must diligently learn, cheerfully attend and habituate our selves to, if we will be qualified for his presence, *where is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.*

This is a subject often proper and expedient, but upon some important concerns more especially seasonable. Whence I come to discover, Secondly, the particular happy occasion of the blessed Virgin's joy, which in some respects was peculiar to her, but in its principal end and design, universal to the world.

Great and transporting must be her joy, who was so *highly favoured* and distinguished, as to be ordained by God, the chosen vessel to convey the most inestimable blessing mankind ever did, or could possibly receive. What tongue is able to express

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express, or what heart conceive those overflowings of joy she was on every side comforted and surrounded with at this glorious message, these *glad tidings* of the Angel? Well might her nearest friends and relations, on a salutation so honourable, so agreeably surprizing, congratulate her in these words, *Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.* Well might she her self in those circumstances she then was, expostulate with the Angel, *How shall this be?* And when answered in this manner, *the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee, and that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the son of God.* When informed by the same voice, that her aged relation had already conceived, who was reputed barren, and that *nothing was impossible with God.* When re-assured by her Cousin, that there should
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be a performance of those things that were told her of the Lord. Upon such extraordinary news, so wonderfully discovered, and so strongly attested, well might she shout forth, and triumph in the words of my Text, My soul doth magnifie the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my saviour.

But tho' the honour and happiness of conceiving our Lord, was peculiar to this Virgin, and whence all nations of the earth, as well as the woman in the Gospel, may allow and declare, *Blessed is the womb which bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.* Yet the Privileges of this birth, and benefits of this incarnation, are of the most general extent, and universal concern. All generations past, present and future ages have abundant reason to congratulate so glorious a festival, and rejoice in the good effects of so blessed a Nativity.

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The contemplation of this great, this adorable mystery, is in every circumstance, and in its whole design, a matter of wonder and joy to all people. That *he who thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, should condescend to assume the infirmities of our nature; that *he who was from everlasting, and whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain*, should be confined to a narrow womb, and submit to a *new birth*; that he should quit those blessed mansions of perfect peace and consummate bliss, for regions every way encompass'd with disorder and trouble, that mere compassion and mercy to us miserable sinners, should be the impulsive cause and motive of so important a work, are arguments of so amazing and *condescending* a love, as if seriously weighed and pondered, must fill our heads with wonder, and our hearts with joy. Such transcendent mysteries and miracles of mercy, the
very

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very Angels themselves can never sufficiently admire, and are as much above what we can conceive, as they are beyond what we deserve. And if those blessed Saints above, who were perfectly happy, and needed no Redeemer, rejoiced at these things, how transported should we be who are peculiarly designed, and shall, if we are not wanting to our selves, be partakers of the blessings?

Survey the work of our redemption, the happy consequence of this auspicious season and glorious solemnity? Consider the rise, progress, and accomplishment of this mystery, the wise contrivance of the Father, the free offer of the Son, and the gracious concurrence of the Holy Ghost. Reflect on the misery of our former circumstances through sin, and the present privileges and advantages we are entitled to through grace, and we shall entertain

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ertain our minds with the most delightful subjects, and noblest meditations we are capable of. The joy that results from such spiritual, such glorious contemplations, is much superior to the *joy in harvest*, and the transporting triumphs of *those who divide the spoil*. If we enquire into the usual causes of, and motives to joy, we shall find none more inviting, more powerful and persuasive.

Is promotion to high honour and preferment, a just occasion of joy? What greater dignity can be conferred or conceived, than the privileges of our Saviour's birth entitle us to? Hereby divinity is espoused to humanity, and vile dust and ashes exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on High. 'Twas indeed our honour and privilege to have been made at first, but *little lower than the Angels*, and in our primitive perfections very nearly resembling

bling the divine image of our Maker. But since God hath *bowed the heavens, and come down*, nay stooped so low as to be *cloathed with our flesh*, we are in this respect superior even to the Angels themselves. Such an exaltation of our natures in so astonishing a manner, might well constrain us to expostulate, *Lord, what is man that thou wast so mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou so regardest him!* With what transports then should we celebrate and rejoice in this birth, which introduced such high honour, and advanced us to such exceeding glory?

Are the happy tidings of peace and hopes of an entire reconciliation matter of comfort and joy? This festival introduces the Prince of peace, that powerful Mediator between God and Man, the Man *Christ Jesus*. The ransom he came down to pay, made a perfect atonement for the sins of the whole world, and

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reconciled us to God, to the entire vindication and glory, even of all his attributes. For what greater love could have been shewn to sinners? What greater hatred to sin? What more could mercy have bestowed? Or even justice it self require? What proportions then of joy should that nativity create, which ushered in so great, so glorious a Redemption? With what exultation should we congratulate his *coming into the flesh*, to whose exemplary life, and meritorious death, we owe our present peace, and our future happiness.

Are blessings infinite in number, inestimable in value, and endless in duration, reasonable motives to joy, and proper subjects of triumph? Who can count the hairs of our heads, the sand on the sea shore, or the stars in the firmament? Yet these fall infinitely short of the mercies of heaven, the blessings which commenced

menced at this birth, and result from our Redemption. 'Tis lost labour to particularize, recollect, or repeat them; we should rather be swallowed up in the admiration of the Psalmist, *O how great is the sum of them!* Nor are these trifling concerns, and of inconsiderable value. but exceeding precious in themselves, and important in their consequences; they are the means of grace, and the hopes of glory, privileges that conduce to our present and future well-being, to the perfect and consummate happiness of our bodies and souls. So many, so great, and so durable benefits, can proceed from none but an infinite benefactor. These must be *the Lord's doings*, and should therefore *be marvelous in our eyes.*

A joy founded on such grounds, issuing from such motives, and tending to such prospects, leads me Thirdly and Lastly, to urge our

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consequent obligations to gratitude and obedience.

The tribute of our lips, and conformity of our lives, are but reasonable returns for the joyful triumphs of so glorious a festival. A heart touched with a due sense of such inestimable privileges, cannot well content it self with secret reflections, and silent acknowledgments. Indeed the divine favours and mercies are so freely bestowed, and frequently renewed, that *we should be always giving thanks unto the Lord, his praise should ever be in our mouths; we should be telling of his salvation from day to day, proclaiming his honour, and declaring his wonders among the people.* But more especially are we obliged to *enter the Lord's house with the voice of joy and thanksgiving among such as keep holy day.* All solemn seasons deserve and require more than ordinary sacrifices of praise and triumph. And sure none can be a nobler

bler theme for our praise, or claim a juster title to our gratitude, than the glorious privilege of this birth, to which we owe even more than the creation of our bodies, the redemption of our souls. *The sun of righteousness is risen with healing in his wings, the Redeemer out of Sion is come to proclaim liberty to the captives, and therefore joy and gladness should fill our hearts, and sorrow and mourning should flee away.* 'Tis very meet and right, that the tribute of our lips should bear some proportion to the importance of the day, and dignity of the subject. A birth so honourable, so advantageous to mankind, all hearts should rejoyce in, and all tongues extol. Let us then *open wide the door of our lips, that the King of Glory may come in. Let us rejoyce, and be glad, and do honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come.* Because God hath sent his only begotten son, by the operation

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of the Holy Ghost, to be, as at this time born of the Virgin *Mary*; therefore, with Angels and Archangels, and all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify his glorious name. Nor is the obedience of our lives a less necessary tribute than the sacrifice of our lips. Vain and ridiculous is that joy which demonstrates it self only in wanton mirth, and costly entertainments. Abominable and sinful that, which takes pleasure in abusing so sacred a solemnity by drunkenness, gluttony, and inordinate revelling. But divinely noble, and truly Christian is that, which prompts and provokes us to righteousness, temperance, purity, charity, and all manner of good works. We ought to distinguish this solemn season by the strictest duty and homage our most regulated wills and most exalted affections are capable of, joining consort with that heavenly host, and *ascribing glory to God on high*, the
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great Author of our salvation, living peaceably on earth, as it becomes us who are the subjects of the *Prince of Peace*, and shewing *good will towards men*, as we have Christ for our example, who in so high a degree loved, that he even dyed for all. With such zeal, and in such a manner it becomes us to be thankful, by *abounding in every good word and work*, and making our piety as fruitful as our joy.

We should chuse to employ much of our time and thoughts, at these holy seasons in devout meditations, and exercise our selves rather unto godliness. We should summon all the affections and powers of our souls, should expostulate with our selves, after the example of holy *David*, *What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits?* And thus conclude with him: We will duly prepare our selves, and thankfully receive the *cup of salvation*,

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precious body and blood which our blessed Lord, at this time, in great humility assumed, and afterwards as chearfully resigned. Thus by adding the purity of our minds, and innocence of our lives, to the unfeigned thankfulness of our mouths, we shall celebrate this festival as becomes our profession. But in vain do we seem to approach God with our hearts, or honour him with our lips, unless we glorify him in our actions also. The multitude, or costliness of our oblations will but little avail; since *they only who order their conversation right, shall see the salvation of our God.*

Let us therefore in those excellent words of the Collect of our Church, most earnestly pray;

Almighty God give us grace, that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit

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fit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the quick and dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with thee, and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.



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SERMON. VIII.

Preach'd at the

ROYAL-CHAPEL

At St. *JAMES'S* 1712.

Joh. 5. ver. 28, 29.

*For the hour is coming, in the
which all that are in the graves
shall hear his voice, And come
forth, they that have done
good, unto the resurrection of
life,*

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life, and they that have done
evil, unto the resurrection of
damnation.



HERE has been no article of our faith more generally doubted of, more difficultly entertained, or more universally objected against, than that of a *Resurrection*. The *Gnosticks* by their false glosses and interpretations overthrew the faith of a future state, and in effect destroyed the sense of a *Resurrection*, by affirming, that it was already past. The *Sadducees* absolutely deny'd a *Resurrection*, would allow of no final retribution, nor any subsistence of either soul or body after death. The *Philosophers* made it a matter of jest and derision, and thought it needless to condemn and cry down what by its very absurdity would destroy itself, and scarce any of the
Heathens

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Heathens could be prevailed upon to digest such a seeming impossibility. Indeed those that determine all things by the strength of their own judgments, who make reason their only standard, and resolve to believe no more than they are able to comprehend, may well object and expostulate, *How are the dead raised up, and with what bodies do they come?* But to those that submit their reason to their faith, that rely upon the authority of the Scriptures, and a divine Power, it cannot seem either impossible or incredible that God should raise the dead; since there is nothing in it that implies a contradiction, or is unworthy of God, and since our Saviour so expressly declares in the words of my text, *That the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have*
done

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done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.

From which words I shall, First, prove the doctrine of a Resurrection, *That they are in the graves, shall hear his voice, and come forth.* Secondly, That this Resurrection shall be general. *All that are in the graves, shall hear his voice, and come forth.* Thirdly, The difference that shall be between the righteous and the wicked. *They that have done good, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.* Fourthly and Lastly, The good influences this doctrine ought to have on our faith and practice.

First, I am to *prove the doctrine of a Resurrection*: Which I shall do by considering, First, That a Resurrection is not in its own nature *impossible.* Secondly, That upon moral grounds it is highly *probable.* Thirdly,

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Thirdly, That upon Christian principles it is infallibly *certain*.

First, *A Resurrection is not in its own nature impossible*. To collect and rally up the crumbled atoms of our bodies, how long soever dissolved, how far so ever dispersed, or how much soever confounded and corrupted: To re-unite them integrally to our souls, and so to quicken and enliven each part, that every member shall become fit to exert its proper operations, seems to transcend and surmount the power of mere *Natural Reason*, and what, without a *Divine Revelation*, we might have been as unable to have conceived, as to have effected. But if we reflect not upon the Creature, but the Creator, not upon any finite and limited, but an Omniscient and Omnipotent Power, what may seem *impossible with men*, is not so with God, to whom all things are possible, who is a Being of infinite

nite wisdom and knowledge, who *knows whereof we were made* at the foundation of the world, and what we must return to at the dissolution; *In whose book all our members were written, from whom our substance was not hid, when we were made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth; whose all-seeing Eye, through the most distant tracts of time, and variation of places, through the most subtle division, confusion and corruption of parts, can discern and distinguish which distinct particles belong to each member, which particular members to each body, and which numerical body to each soul.*

Nor is he less Omnipotent, than Omniscient, what he understands he is able to accomplish, whatsoever is the object of his knowledge, is the object also of his power. He that knows of what materials our earthly tabernacles were composed, and
into

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into what shapes and figures they were framed, he that can penetrate the inmost chambers and recesses of nature, and discerns the several receptacles and repositories where every atom lies, what hinders but that he, who brought order out of confusion, can at the general consummation of all things restore to each distinct soul its same individual body in its proper substance and proportion. For *is there any thing too hard for the Almighty?* Cannot he raise us from the grave, who raised the world out of nothing? Is not the difficulty of forming man out of dust as great, if not greater, than restoring the same when returned to dust? That what was once earth, out of earth made a body, afterwards dissolved into earth, should return again to its same primitive body, implies nothing in it of a contradiction or repugnancy, consequently may be the ob-

object of divine Power, and therefore those who pretend to limit and circumscribe Omnipotency, *err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the Power of God*, in whose hands are the *keys of death and the grave*, whose prerogative it is to *kill and to make alive*, and who as he at first gave us a being, so when extinct can he as easily restore it.

But, Secondly, *A Resurrection* is not only in its own nature not impossible, but upon moral grounds it is *highly probable*. Which may appear if we consider the principles of humanity, the parts of which man consists, the *flesh* and *spirit*, which, however different in themselves, yet how amicably do they unite, with what reluctance do they divide, and how repugnant to nature is a separation? Whence we may rationally infer, that they were designed by God for a more durable continuance, a more lasting re-union in

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another world; and since many of the inferior and more ignoble creatures, the fowls of the air, the plants of the field, and the fishes of the sea, have a longer duration here, and out-live the sons of men, for whose service they were created; if we should suppose (as some rather wish for, than believe) an Annihilation or utter Extinction of our beings after this life; how is't possible to vindicate the wisdom and conduct of the Almighty, and ascribe him that glory and honour that's due unto the Creation? We cannot therefore well reconcile and solve these difficulties unless we have recourse to, and allow of a future subsistence, a re-union of soul and body in another life, The endless duration of which will abundantly recompense for the shortness of this. Indeed many of the Heathen Moralists from principles of mere natural reason, and the constant ob-

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servation and experience of *things*, did as good as suggest and imply a *Resurrection*, arguing, that therefore wicked men either were not, or could not be punished as they deserved in this world, because they were reserved for another; though most of them seemed rather diffident than positive in so important a matter; discover'd more their hopes and fears, than any firm belief or persuasion.

Nay, unless we suppose this, I cannot see how we can account for all those seeming irregularities and mysterious riddles of Providence. When they who blaspheme God, trample upon his laws, and defy his authority, prevail and flourish, when fraud, flattery, and hypocrisie serve as instruments to promote and advance them in the world, and wicked men not only escape unpunished, but are rewarded for being so: When they who honour God,

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conscientiously obey his laws, and live peaceably with all men, are affronted and reviled: When virtue and innocence, which should be their defence and protection, but more expose them to danger, and rather invite others to oppression, than secure them against it; I say, when good men are not only unrewarded in this world, but even reproached for being so, how is't possible to vindicate and justifie God's honour, and guard his attributes from prophane misconstructions? Should we not rather complain with those in the Prophet, That it is *vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?* Mal. 3. 14, 15. Should we not rather stile the *ungodly happy, when they that work wickedness are set up, yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.* Hence some have been brought to doubt of a
 God

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God and Religion, others to abandon the thoughts of either, not extending either their hopes or fears to another life, but arguing as those Atheistical sensualists did in the *Apostles* time, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die*; let us enjoy ourselves in this present state, since we despair of a future. Thus *unwise men do not well consider this, and fools cannot understand it*. Nay, such considerations as these have staggered the faith and damped the devotion even of the best of men; their feet had well nigh slip'd, being unable to account for such rigorous, and therefore seemingly unrighteous dispensations of Providence: And indeed, as *St. Paul* very elegantly argues, if good men *only in this life* were to have hope, if all the advantages they reap by Christ were to terminate here, they would be of all men the most miserable. But if we consider that this is only a state of probation,

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that there is no final issue and determination of things here below, but that all must be referred to that great and general day of Judgment, this unfolds and explains those hidden mysteries of Providence, reconciles us to God's justice, vindicates his honour, proclaims his wisdom, displays and glorifies his patience and mercy. So that from the reason, expediency and necessity thereof, we may rationally expect and conclude, that *there will be a Resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.* But not to rest any longer upon mere *possibilities*, or bare *probabilities* in so important a matter, I hasten to prove, Thirdly, *That a Resurrection upon Christian Principles is infallibly certain.* It is the express word, the determined will, and absolute promise of *him who cannot lye*, and who is subject to *no variableness nor shadow of turning.* It was confirmed to us in the
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Old Testament by many undoubted testimonies and predictions. This was *Job's* consolation, when overwhelmed and perplexed from without with the most violent agonies, and no less miserably harassed and confounded from within by the impious insinuations of her, who would persuade him to curse his Maker; I say, when thus violently assaulted from both parts, yet had he still this assurance left, which could support him under all; *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though after my skin-worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God, Job 19. 25, 26.* The words of *Daniel*, which the *Jews* themselves acknowledge are very express to this purpose, *Dan. 12. 2. Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*

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Nor was it only revealed and prophesied, but really confirmed and exemplified. The widow of *Sarepta's* son and the *Shunamite's* child in the Old Testament, the daughter of *Jairus* and *Lazarus* in the New being proper and powerful instances of a Resurrection. But no argument is more convincing, no example more effectual than that of our Saviour. *For if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no Resurrection of the dead?* If he that taught this doctrine to the *Apostles*, confirmed it when living by the power of his Godhead, and was himself an instance of it after his death, what greater evidence can be produced? what stronger testimony can we have to confirm its truth? From hence we may infallibly conclude, that *God hath appointed a day for a general Resurrection, whereof he hath given an assurance*

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rance unto all men, in that he hath raised up Jesus from the dead. The truth of which is what we at this time commemorate, and indeed is the very foundation of Religion, the basis of Christianity, and that which gives credit and authority to the other articles of our faith. The proof whereof so exactly corresponding to the nature of my text, and the solemnity of the day, it cannot be either improper or unseasonable to enforce and insist upon.

That we are not equally assured of all things, but that there are different degrees of certainty, I suppose it may be sufficient to assert, and not to prove; but there is no matter of fact capable of a fuller confirmation, or which we can obtain a more entire assurance of, than we have of this.

It was confirmed by the most sufficient and credible witnesses, such as in number were many, and those
neither

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neither ignorant of the matter of fact, nor mistaken in any circumstances about it, nor unfaithful in relating it. It was the testimony of the *holy women*, the testimony of the *Apostles*, nay, of *five hundred brethren at once*, to whom he appeared. It was the testimony of *St. Thomas*, who searched the holes the nails had made in his hands, and thrust his finger into his side, whose very distrust was a means to confirm our faith, to silence all doubts for the future, and render them wholly inexcusable; whereas, had he made none, or but few scruples, we in these captious times might have made more. It was the testimony of *St. Stephen*, who saw his glory when expiring, and of *St. Paul*, when lighted by it to his conversion.

It was the testimony of *Angels*, who, as they appeared to him at his nativity, ministred to him after his temptation, and attended him in
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the garden, so did they bear witness to his resurrection. They *sat at the head and the feet*, where the body of Jesus lay, and thus expostulated with the women: *Why seek ye the living among the dead? he is not here, but is risen.* It was lastly the testimony of his very enemies. The *Keepers* who pretended to secure him from the *Apostles*, they who saw the countenance of *an Angel like lightning*, and who themselves *shook for fear*, and became as dead men, while he whom they guarded, was raised to life, some of these *came into the city*, and *shewed unto the chief Priests all the things that were done.*

Nay the *Chief Priests and Elders* were conscious of the truth of it themselves, though ashamed to acknowledge it, and therefore they suborned and corrupted the soldiers to support a falsehood; like those who to conceal a lesser crime, incur a greater, as *David* had recourse to murder,

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murder, to hide his adultery: So these rather than own their former error, plunge themselves farther into guilt. Their first crime of condemning and crucifying our Saviour, was much less than this last of concealing his Resurrection. Ignorance might have been alledged for the one, but this other was mere obstinacy and presumption; besides, the former was only levell'd against his life, but this latter strikes at even his divinity it self. *What need* then have we *of farther witnesses?* So many concurrent testimonies may command, not beg our assent.

But farther, what yet more confirms this truth, is that many of those who had *been with him from the beginning*, eat and drank with him after his passion, saw and communed with him for forty days together, and had the most infallible proofs of his Resurrection; that therefore the senses of so many could

could so often, and for so long a time be abused and imposed upon, cannot but be very absurd and ridiculous to assert, or even so much as to imagine.

The only thing therefore that with any colour or pretence could be question'd or excepted against, must be their honesty and integrity, that they had a design to impose upon the world, by setting up new schemes of religion of their own, and therefore were unfaithful in the relation, which both from the doctrines they taught, and their manner of behaviour, must be very absurd to conclude. How improbable is it, that rude, illiterate Fishermen, such as had no opportunities of education and improvement, should be able to contrive, and carry on a design; nay, that they should be capable of modelling so excellent and perfect a scheme, as surpassed and supplanted all other
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religions in the world, that baffled the mighty *wisdom of the Greeks*, and confounded their most subtle and refined philosophy, that was such a *stumbling block to the Jews*, as neither they, nor their posterity were ever able to remove.

Besides, the doctrines they taught forbad all manner of hypocrisy, under pain of damnation; if therefore they had forged a falshood upon the world, it is very unlikely they would have pronounced so severely against that they must so often have incurred the guilt of.

Nor will it appear less absurd, if we consider the exemplariness of their practice, through their whole lives. They could appeal to all the world, *how holily, justly, and unblamably* they had behaved themselves; no less instructive in their examples than their discourses, aiming at no sinister or indirect ends, but

but observing a most strict and uniform integrity in all their actions. Had they attested a falshood, they might indeed have imposed upon others, but would most upon themselves, they must designedly have render'd themselves miserable, courted persecutions in this life, and damnation in the next. They could not expect, nor pretend to any honour, profit or pleasure in the world; nay it is very plain they neither sought after, nor desired any; they aimed at no glory but that of their Master, no interest but that of truth, no pleasure but that of faithfully discharging a good conscience, which as they had constantly and inviolably maintained, so did they chuse rather to dye for, than live without it.

From the whole therefore we may justly conclude, that 'tis impossible to conceive how so many and such unexceptionable witnesses, either could

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could be deceived themselves, or would deceive others; whence we may safely rely on this infallible truth, that *Christ is risen*, and consequently that *there will be a Resurrection of the dead*. I come now to prove Secondly, *That this Resurrection will be general*. All they that are in the graves, shall hear his voice, and come forth.

There will be no exception, exemption or limitation of persons; but both the just and unjust, the faithful and the reprobate, all shall rise again with their bodies, as certainly as they dye.

Indeed there have not been wanting those who have maintained and pleaded for a partial Resurrection; wholly excluding the wicked, and confining it only to the elect. They will allow, that reward being a matter of favour, God may dispense and extend it in as large a measure as he pleases, even to everlasting
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happiness in another world; but then they do not think it consistent either with the mercy or justice of God, to punish temporal sins with eternal torments. It has been commonly observed, that *ill principles* are generally the consequences of *ill lives*. Men are easily induced to credit what suits with their affections and inclinations; and therefore wicked men, whose interest it is to wish for an annihilation, may soon argue themselves into its belief and persuasion. For no wonder if such are enemies to a doctrine which is so very manifestly against them, who had much rather cease to be, than to be raised again only to everlasting misery. But, having established this principle, lest there should be wanting some seeming pretence and refuge (like the Devil in the temptation of our Saviour) they quote Scripture to maintain their position, where they will have the words *de-*

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struction and perishing, which are there usually denounced against sinners, to be meant only of a *temporal death*, and to import no more than an utter extinction of their beings.

Thus do they persuade themselves and others to sin on with security, that the consequence thereof will be at worst, but a privation of blessings, and that all those frightful descriptions of Hell fire, are nothing else but chimerical bug-bears, have more terror in them than truth.

Thus miserably do they delude themselves, till they come to feel those judgments they have so long defyed, till they are doomed to be *cast out into utter darkness, where is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth*, into that *lake burning with fire and brimstone*, which at once affects all parts with variety of tortures, and that to all eternity.

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But whatever those whose interest it is to have their souls and bodies both perish together, may persuade themselves; yet eternal truth hath assured us that both shall vitally unite again, never more to be separated, but mutually to partake of either endless bliss or misery. And therefore *so we preach, and so we believe.*

When all enemies shall be destroyed, and death it self *swallowed up in victory*, when the last *Trumpet shall sound*, and the general summons shall be given, then *must we all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Whence I come to consider

Thirdly, *The difference that shall be between the righteous and the wicked. They that have done good shall come forth into the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*

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The bodies of all men shall rise again, and be united to their souls; none being exempted from this general summons, though many, too many not partakers of the blessing. They only *that have done good, that have lived soberly, righteously, and godlily in this life, shall inherit a better*, they who have zealously advanced God's honour on earth, shall reign triumphantly with him in heaven; the joys and glories of which are so exceeding great, that they not only transcend expression, but even imagination it self. The greatest of temporal blessings are but types and and figures of these more refined spiritual and eternal comforts; the *land of promise* was but a faint shadow and representation of that heavenly *Canaan*, that *inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, reserved for ever for us*; where all the faculties of our better part shall become more perfect, our intellectual

tellectual capacities more enlarged, our wills more regulated, and our affections more refined.

Where our bodies shall be changed, and enjoy the noblest properties, such as *St. Paul* at large describes in the 15th. chapter of the *Corinthians*, at the 42d. 43d. and 44th. verses, what was sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption. What was sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory; what was sown in weakness, shall be raised in power. What was sown a natural body, shall be raised a spiritual body.

First, *What was sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption.* Our bodies, which through the depravity of our natures were obnoxious to all manner of diseases and inconveniences, on which so much of our time and care was employed to preserve them, and yet more to please and pamper them, shall be then entirely free from all those principles of mortality, that bur-

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den of flesh, and bondage of corruption.

Secondly, *What was sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory.* Our bodies which were perhaps weak, deformed and sickly, even disgrace and burden to us here, shall then be improved beyond their perfection, and bear a nearer resemblance of the divine image, than the first man *Adam* did before his transgression: For they shall be cloathed with so much brightness and splendor, that the sun it self shall not exceed them in glory; nay, they shall be *fashion'd like Christ's glorious body*, the refulgency of which transported *St. Peter* into an Ecstasy, and even blinded *St. Paul*.

Thirdly, *What was sown in weakness, shall be raised in power.* Our earthly *tabernacles* which here pressed down the soul, confined the agility of its motions, and obstructed its operations, shall be then wholly refined
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and sublimated, shall become as free and nimble as air, always ready and on the wing, like those officious ministers *sent forth to minister unto the heirs of salvation.*

Fourthly, *What was sown a natural body, shall be raised a spiritual body.* Our flesh which was here earthy and material, shall there be spiritualized and free from all grossness and pollution, shall no longer *war against the soul*, and hinder its devotion, but shall be always ready with the holy fellowship of the *Prophets*, and the noble armies of *Martyrs*, to sing *Hallelujahs to him who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever.*

Thus in heaven shall our souls and bodies be exalted and glorified; abundantly satisfied in the contemplation and fruition of God, in a confluence and perpetuity of those joys, which neither the *tongues of men nor Angels* can be able to express: For after all, it must be cor-

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fessed, that the best of our descriptions must come far short of that of which it is impossible to say enough.

But *as for the ungodly, it is not so with them.* They who have done evil, must indeed rise again, but it shall be to *a resurrection of damnation.* Horror, anguish and despair shall be their inseparable companions, incessantly perplexing them from without, and upbraiding them from within. To depart with the cursed into everlasting fire, shall be their portion and inheritance; the smোক of their torment shall ascend up for ever and ever, perpetually feeding upon both soul and body, yet destroying neither. Such is the nature and extremity of those torments the damned endure, admitting no ease or remedy, no intercession, nor end. Then shall we clearly discern between the righteous and the wicked; then shall wisdom be justified of all her children, and

and a sensible *difference* be made between those who *served God*, and those who *served him not*.

Whence I come to shew Fourthly and Lastly, The good influences this doctrine ought to have on our faith and practice. And First, Are there such reasonable grounds, moral evidences, and certain scriptural proofs for this doctrine of a Resurrection? How ought we then to *take heed, lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief*, in distrusting or departing from this important truth? The motives of our assent to this great article of our faith, are abundantly sufficient for every man's conviction, are such as may satisfy the most curious, and silence and confound the most inquisitive sceptick. For we do not depend on the fallible authority of mere oral tradition, but on the writings of those who were witnesses themselves of every thing they relate, and who
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are allowed to be the authors of those books, whose names they bear, not only by Christians, but Heathens, Jews, and even Apostates themselves. And if there are those now, who require sensible evidence and perfect demonstration, who argue if they might see our Saviour's miracles, and hear the Apostles preaching, they would believe; yet in all probability, could their vain wishes be fulfilled, and should Christ come down from heaven, and St. *Paul* and St. *Peter* appear again in the pulpit, they would continue still as scrupulous, as obstinate as ever.

Let not us then indulge such idle pretences, nor disbelieve or doubt of so fundamental a doctrine, but let us be nicely tender of its credit, seasonably vindicate it from the arts of the designing, and rally of the profane, and persevere too in its defence with a courageous, honest and becoming zeal. Thus shall we stop
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the mouths of all confident gain-sayers, who pretending to be *wise against what is written*, betray at once both their wickedness and weakness. Thus disclaiming all *science falsely so called*, and submitting our *carnal reasonings to the wisdom from above*, we shall readily assent to this important truth, and *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*.

But that we may in all things *adorn*, as well as defend this Christian *doctrine*, Let us Secondly, take care, that our lives correspond with our principles, and that to the soundness of our faith, we add an exemplary practice.

If Christ's death and resurrection create in us *a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness*; if we live as becomes those who profess the Gospel, who are candidates for heaven, and heirs of a blessed immortality, we shall then feel that peace and serenity of mind, those
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first-fruits and earnest of our obedience here, shall continually feed upon the hopes, till at length we *reap* the full *harvest*, and enjoy the compleat reward of it in glory everlasting.

But if this doctrine of a Resurrection should only speculatively affect, and not practically move us; if when our understandings are enlightned, and our judgments sufficiently convinced, our wills are not more regulated, nor our practice more reformed, what excuses can we make? or how shall we be able to answer the charge either to God, the world, or even our own consciences? And this, I fear, however melancholy, is yet too just a complaint against too many Christians, who are so happy as to know their duty, and yet so perverse and graceless as not to practice accordingly. But if Christ hath conquered the powers of Sin and *Satan*, and *delivered*

vered us out of the hands of our enemies, ought we not in reason and gratitude to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives. Will it not highly aggravate our guilt thus obstinately to resist such pow'rful means, obligations, and motives to duty and obedience? Do we not hereby frustrate the design of our Redemption, and the end of Christ's coming? For according to St. Paul's way of arguing, if ye continue in sin, notwithstanding this abounding grace, then is Christ not risen to your comfort and benefit, and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

Since then Christ both died and rose again to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purifie to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works; Let us reckon our selves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord: Let
not

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not sin reign in our mortal bodies, that we should obey it in the lusts thereof, nor yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but let us yield our selves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

Let us not wantonly mispend, or licentiously prophane, but seriously consider, and wisely improve this sacred solemnity. Nay, *Let us keep always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards Man, that at the general dissolution of all things, when Christ shall appear to judge the world, we may be found an acceptable people in his sight, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.*



SERMON IX.

Preach'd before the

QUEEN

At St. JAMES's 1710.

Act. chap. 3. ver. 21.

*Whom the heaven must receive
until the times of restitution
of all things, which God hath
spoken by the mouth of all his
holy*

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holy Prophets since the world
began.



AS the life and death of Christ were condescending and precious : so were his resurrection and ascension glorious : By those we adore his goodness, by these we admire his power, and in the concurrence of which we may visibly discern the most transcendent wisdom. But without the latter, the former had been vain, fruitless, and ineffectual. The exemplariness of his life, the perfection of his doctrine, and that variety of miracles which he wrought to confirm it, his patience, courage, and constancy on the cross would have made but slight impressions upon the minds of men, had he been unable (as he promised) to have raised himself from the dead, and entered into glory. Nay, the generality

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lity of men, instead of honouring his memory, and imitating his good works, might very justly have insulted in the language of the Chief Priests, *He saved others, himself he cannot save.* But since Christ by the infinite power of his Godhead hath triumphed over death, hell, and the grave, since by the same (as we on this day commemorate) he ascended into heaven, we have the clearest and strongest proofs we can expect to confirm our faith, as well as we have the most perfect rules, and highest motives we can desire to engage our obedience.

That article which concerns our Lord's Resurrection, I shall not here discourse of, intending to confine my self wholly to the consideration of that profitable indeed at all times, but more especially seasonable at this, the *Ascension* of our Lord.

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Now as our Saviour even after his Resurrection continued *forty days on earth* to dissipate the fears, satisfy the doubts, confirm the faith, and excite the hopes of his disciples and followers: so these being expired, he prepared, as he designed, and had declared by his Prophets, to ascend into heaven. And as the *Apostles* had *seen with their eyes, heard with their ears, and handled with their hands* this their Lord of life, since his late victory obtained over death and the grave: so 'twas thought not only expedient, but necessary too, that they should be *eye-witnesses of his entring into glory*. When therefore the eleven and sundry others were assembled together, he made his last appearance in the presence of them all; and having opened their understandings, he warned them of many things they must do and suffer for his names sake, assuring them withal, of those powers and

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and assistances they should receive from above : And then *leading them as far as mount Olivet*, a very advantageous prospect, after he had solemnly blessed them *while they beheld he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight*. And that there might be no room for doubt when their eyes failed, their ears too were entertained with the joyful news of his entring those glorious mansions, by two inhabitants of the place, who at the same time assured them, that at the general Judgment he should so come in like manner, as they had seen him go into heaven. Nay, were there no other evidence, yet those miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost so expressly promised before, and so immediately conferred after, sufficiently confirm his ascension into heaven.

'Twere easie, if necessary, to confirm the truth of this article by a great variety of proofs, but in the

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compass of a discourse of this nature, it may suffice to shew, First, The absolute necessity hercof on Christ's part. Secondly, The great privileges and benefits on ours. Thirdly, The good uses and influences it ought to have on all.

First then, I am to prove the absolute necessity of Christ's Ascension on his part, which I shall endeavour to illustrate by these three particulars. First, Because the Ascension of Christ was represented by types, and declared by prophecies. Secondly, Because he had fulfilled the will of God, and finished all he was sent to do on earth. Thirdly, To receive the glorious rewards of his humiliation.

First then, Christ's Ascension was necessary as it was represented by types, and declared by prophecies. Indeed, various and numerous were the types and figures under the Old Testament, which, with just analogy,

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gy, might refer to the Ascension of Christ. The miraculous escape of *Josepb* from the envious rage of his brethren, and his advancement from a prison to be Lord of *Pharaoh's* house: The trials and afflictions of *David*, *Daniel*, and *Job*, their happy deliverances from these, with their future great and additional advantages have been insisted on as types and figures of Christ, who from the most malicious prosecutions, even to death and the grave, was raised and exalted to the highest heavens. The translation of *Enoch* and that of *Elias* in the presence of *Elisha*, were manifest preludes of our Lord's Ascension. But above all, the sole and solemn *entrance of the High Priest into the holy of holies*, in the most significant manner prefigured and represented him, who, as the Apostle asserts, *entred once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

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Nor was our Lord's Ascension described only typically, but declared prophetically : For my text assures us, That *the heaven must receive him until the times of restitution of all things*, a truth attested by God from the mouth of all his holy Prophets since the world began. The Prophet *Isaiah* assures us, That his *Man of sorrows shall be exalted and extolled*. The Psalmist expressly confirms it in those very remarkable words, *Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive*. Nay, our Saviour himself declared to *Mary Magdalen*, *I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God*. He reasoned and expostulated with his incredulous disciples, *Ought not Christ to suffer these things, and enter into his glory?* From which words he clearly convinced them of the necessity and certainty, no less of his ascension, than of his death and passion, in order to fulfil those prophecies

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phesies that were delivered of him. So that if we regard the most significant types, or believe the most express prophecies, we cannot but argue with *St. Paul*, That *he who descended was the same also that must ascend far above all heavens*. A second ground and reason why 'twas necessary that Christ should ascend, was, because he had fulfilled the will of God, and finished all he was sent to do on earth. *St. John* introduces our Saviour as directly appealing to God in confirmation of this truth: *I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorifie thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was, Joh. 17. 4, 5.* By the excellency of his doctrine, and power of his miracles, by the spotless innocence of his life, and merits of his death, he compleated that work for which he disrobed

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himself of his glory, and condescended to come into the world, the redemption of mankind.

Such indeed was the nature and efficacy of those excellent precepts taught and urged by our Saviour, that none but even the most obstinate and reprobate could gainsay or resist them. His very enemies were forced to expostulate, *Whence bath this man this wisdom and these mighty works?* Nay, those who were sent on purpose to ensnare him in his discourse, were so wrought upon by the weight and efficacy of his words, that, instead of accusing him to the Chief Priests, they freely and fairly acknowledged, that *never man spake like this man.*

And as his doctrines were wise and pow'ful: so were his miracles great and numerous. For *at the word of his mouth, the dumb spake, the maim were made whole, the lame walked, the deaf heard, and the blind saw,*

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saw, which gave just cause for the multitude to wonder, and glorifie the God of Israel. His whole life was one continued series of wisdom, justice, goodness, truth, purity, and mercy. Tho' he was subject to human passions and infirmities, yet he was perfectly free from all those criminal objects, which our corrupt natures expose us to, and neither did, nor indeed could sin. He fulfilled the whole law in its strictest sense, and utmost extent, nor are the best of our lives worthy to be compared with the unspotted sanctity of his.

But tho' we really owe much to the precepts Christ taught, the miracles he wrought, and the bright example he gave through the whole course of his life, yet the greatest and highest obligations are due to the merits of his death. This indeed was the principal end for which he assumed our nature; this
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was that last finishing work, whereby God was reconciled, and man redeemed: So that having patiently and voluntarily *submitted to death, even the death of the cross*, what more was necessary, or even possible to be done? What remained but that he should ascend into those blessed regions, that exalted session from whence he came, and receive, Thirdly, The glorious rewards of his humiliation? The Author to the *Hebrews* expressly declares, That *when the Son of God had by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right-hand of the Majesty on High.* We may with the eye of faith behold him who was made a *little lower than the Angels*, even abased as a servant, nay, crucified as a sinner, now invested with a *Kingdom that ruleth over all*, crowned with Glory, Majesty, and Honour, *Angels, Principalities, and Powers being made subject unto him.* As from the

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concurrent circumstances and bitter sufferings of our Saviour's life and death, we may conclude with the Prophet, *That no sorrow was like his*: so we must freely acknowledge, that no honour can be compared with, or equal his. As there is *one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars*, those cœlestial bodies differing from one another in glory: so the most exalted station is justly appropriated to him, who is the *heir and Lord of Glory*. This is he *with whom*, in the strictest sense, the most supreme and emphatical manner, *God is well pleased*. *Glory and great worship has he laid upon him, he has made him exceeding glad with the joy of his countenance, nay, has anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows*. Cherubims and Seraphims with loud and joyful Hosanna's congratulate his return to triumph and glory; Angels and Prin-

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- Principalities lay their crowns at his feet ; nay, the whole heav'nly host are poetically introduced as preparing the way, and *opening the everlasting doors that this King of Glory may come in.* Such were the triumphs of Christ's exaltation, and highly necessary it was that such should be the consequent rewards of his humiliation, who as for other very important reasons, so the Apostle assures us, *For the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.*

Having enforced the necessity of Christ's Ascension on his part ; Let us now reflect, Secondly, On the great privileges and benefits on ours. Indeed, various and considerable are the advantages we reap as from the life, death, and resurrection, so from the ascension and exaltation of our Saviour. Those three offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King, which Christ personally per-

performed when he abode here on earth, were not to expire and cease at his death, but to be continued and promoted in heaven: And such great benefits we receive from his ascending thither, as sufficiently compensate the want of his immediate presence here. That promise he made to his disciples and others, of sending them a comforter, he neither did, nor could regularly perform before his ascension: And therefore assures them, that the sacred influences of the Spirit, *those rivers of living waters* (as the Prophet stiles them) *were not yet poured forth, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.* But now being ascended up on high, he had led captivity captive, and given gifts unto men, yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them. When those gifts of the Holy Ghost were at first imparted, and the Apostles spake with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them

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utterance, they were derided by some, censured by others, and wondred at by all. But *St. Peter* confuting such their unjust and invidious reproaches, clearly demonstrates from the Law and the Prophets, whereon they laid so great a stress, and which they so much pretended to value, that this was the result of our Saviour's ascension. That *being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he shed forth that which they then saw and heard*. Since then we have now given us this earnest of God's love, this *spirit of wisdom, understanding and counsel*, we need no better a Prophet to inform our minds, nor a surer guide to direct our steps, and *lead us into all truth*. Of his fulness we may all receive what is conducive and necessary either to our instruction, assistance, or comfort.

Nor

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Nor does Christ, now he is ascended into heaven, only instruct us by the blessed influences of his Holy Spirit, as a Prophet, but intercedes for us as our Priest! He wants not will and inclination to do us all the good we can desire or need. He is always ready to present our requests, to sollicite our cause, and recommend us to God. *Through him we have that free access to the throne of grace*, as must needs animate our hopes, and encourage our boldness. *Do our hearts at any time fail us because of our iniquities?* The blood of Christ will not only atone for those sins of ignorance, inadvertency, or surprize, *wherein we offend all*, but likewise for those wilful and deliberate transgressions we are heartily concerned for, and sincerely repent of; so that if to a due sense of, sorrow for, and desire to forsake our iniquities, we apply the vertue of this meritorious sacrifice, *though our*
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sins (as the Prophet expresses it) were as red as scarlet, yet they shall be as white as snow. We have a gracious mediator in the bosom of the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins. Whence we may very justly and comfortably expostulate in the words of St. Paul, who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died; yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Nor is Christ only willing and ready, but *able also to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him.* For no artifice can elude, nor might restrain, or prevail over him, to whom all power is given both in heaven and earth, and who must reign till all his enemies be made his footstool. The Jews were not only offended, because disappointed, but the very Apostles themselves were too often mistaken in the nature of Christ's King-

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Kingdom, which he himself assured them was not temporal, but spiritual. His birth was very obscure, his whole life was attended with poverty and calamity, and his death ignominious. But now *his throne is for ever and ever, a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of his kingdom.* That remarkable vision of St. John was very exactly fulfilled in the ascension of Christ. *I saw one like the son of man, and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, and that all people, nations and languages should serve him.* Now he rules with his power, protects all those that put their trust in him here, and will finally conduct them *into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.* Now may every true Christian triumph with the Psalmist, *The Lord is my shepherd, therefore can I lack nothing.* Our sufficiency is not from our selves, nor man, but from God. *We can do all things through*

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Christ

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Christ that strengthens us, and if we are faithful unto death, he will give us a crown of life. These are the advantages which through Christ's ascension and exaltation we are entitled to. He continues to exercise the offices of a Prophet, Priest, and King, instructing us with his holy spirit, interceding for us by his blood, and assisting us with his power.

There are other privileges and benefits we derive from hence, as the exalting our natures, and preparing a place for our bodies in those glorious mansions. *We are heirs* (as the author to the *Hebrews* argues) *by a new and living way which Christ hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.* And St. Paul assures us, that *as we have born the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.* We were originally designed for, and are yet capable of immortal glory and honour, even
such

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such honour as have all his saints. Indeed Christ hath made us superior even to the Angels themselves, by uniting our humanity with his divinity, and exalting us to the right hand of his majesty on high. For where the head is, there is the body; and if one member be glorified, all the members are honoured with it. Nay our Saviour expressly declares, Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: So that very justly may we triumph and interrogate in the words of the Psalmist, Lord what is man that thou wast so mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou so regardest him! Such privileges resulting from our Lord's Ascension, so valuable in themselves, and so advantageous in their consequences, require, as well as deserve, the most grateful returns. Which leads me to the Third and Last

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particular, To shew the good uses and influences it ought to have on all. And First, The consideration of this important article of our faith, the Ascension of Christ should create great thankfulness and joy to all people. If we consider the power and malice of those enemies, which Christ subdued and led captive at his triumphant Ascension; if we contemplate the perfection and perpetuity of that happiness he is gone to prepare, and which, if we duly qualify our selves, we shall most certainly attain; if we reflect farther on those advantages and assistances we receive from above, from so kind a friend, so earnest an advocate, and through whose powerful intercession, we can scarce fail of success; these and such like meditations, should fill our souls with gladness and rapture, should make *us rejoice in the Lord always, and joy in the God of our salvation.* 'Twere

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(as *David* expresses it) a great pain and grief to keep silence when our thoughts are employed on so copious a theme, so glorious a subject, as our Lord's Ascension. That God is gone up with a merry noise, and the Lord with the sound of the trumpet, is a sufficient motive to all to sing unto God, and sing praises to his name. The holy Psalmist frequently expressed his great rapture and joy on this glorious occasion. Because the holy one ascended into heaven, and was not permitted to see corruption; therefore says he, *my heart was glad, my glory rejoiced. Moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope.* He describes our Saviour as making the clouds his chariot, and flying upon the wings of the wind; and then exhorts us to magnify him that rideth upon the heavens, as it were upon an horse, to praise him in his name, yea and rejoyce before him. Thus it becomes us on so triumphant an occasion, to be exceeding thankful.

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For *this is the Lord's doing*, and should therefore be *marvelous in our eyes. This is a day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.*

Secondly, The consideration of this article of our Lord's Ascension, serves to exercise and improve both our faith and hope. Hence we firmly believe the dignity of Christ's person, and divinity of his nature, whereby he fasted forty days, wrought miracles, cast out devils, lived without spot, and rose from the grave, since to compleat all, he ascended into heaven, and is there invested with divine glory, majesty, and power. Hence we disclaim and detest the corrupt heresies of those who deny or detract from the perfection of his Godhead, and must allow the inference of *St. John*, to be both reasonable and just, that *we ought to honour the Son as we honour the Father.* How the divine power is compleatly

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communicated to the Son, *is a knowledge too excellent and wonderful for us, who walk by faith, not by sight.* The more we pry into such mysterious points, the less able are we to comprehend them. Nay, our curiosity becomes impiety, our familiarity presumption, and we only dishonour them, and expose our selves. Tho' we ought firmly to believe whatever is revealed, yet we need not perplex our selves with unwary disputes about the manner of that, which is inexplicable to us.

And as we ought not to dispute Christ's power, so we need not distrust his promise; but since, as our fore-runner and head, he is entred into heaven, we also as members and followers may expect admission there. This hope grounded on our Lord's Ascension, is that *sure and stedfast anchor of the soul*, which will support our drooping spirits under the most hazardous trials, and even

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in the greatest extremities. Indeed, there are no calamities we need fear, nor any privileges and advantages we can despair of, having so gracious and pow'rful an *advocate at the right-hand of the Father*, who disposes every thing for the security and interest of those who love, honour, and obey him. So that very justly may we triumph in the words of the Psalmist; *The Lord is our strength and our salvation, whom then shall we fear? the Lord is our portion, therefore will we hope in him.*

Thirdly and Lastly, The consideration of this article of our Lord's Ascension should teach us to withdraw our affections from earthly and transitory objects, and advance them to those that are spiritual and eternal. *For we are but strangers and pilgrims here on earth, as all our fathers were. The fashion of this world passeth away, its honours, riches, and pleasures are too narrow to satisfy that*

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that better part of us, our souls, which require objects of a more substantial and durable nature. The appetites of Christians should savour things that are more refined and spiritual. Our Master is in heaven, and *where he who is our life and treasure is, there should our hearts be also.* Let the *Jews* still expect a *Messias* to come with great pomp and glory; Let *Mahometans* fondly dream of a sensual paradise; yet we trust the God of this world hath not so blinded our eyes, as to let the splendor of any thing that's great to pervert our faith from the true simplicity of the Gospel, nor the desire of any thing that's voluptuous to withdraw our affections from the things that are in heaven, where Christ our leader is, and we all hope to be. *The time past may suffice to have had fellowship with those scandalous and unfruitful works of darkness: Such times of ignorance*
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God might wink at, but now light is come into the world, let us walk as children of the light, and let our conversation be such as adorns and becomes the Gospel of Christ. Let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Christ our forerunner is gone before, let us follow him on the wings of meditation, prayer, and those other spiritual duties wherein our highest interest, satisfaction, and happiness consist. Let us raise and elevate our affections to superior objects, chiefly delight in, and dwell on *that fulness of joy, those rivers of pleasures that are at God's right-hand for evermore.* Thus tho' we are *absent in body*, yet as near as here 'tis possible shall be *present with the Lord*, and make, as it were, even an heaven upon earth.

Since then we cannot be perfectly and compleatly blessed till we come to heaven; since to seek those things
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that are above, is both our present happiness, and best future security ; let us, to our own earnest endeavours, add our fervent and constant prayers in those excellent words of our Collect :

Grant we beseech thee , Almighty God, that like as we do believe thy only begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ to have ascended into the heavens : so we may also in heart and mind thither ascend, and with him continually dwell, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.



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SERMON X.

Preach'd at the

ROYAL-CHAPEL

At St. *JAMES'S* 1711.

Luc. 11. latter part of ver. 13.

How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?



THE gift of the Holy Spirit here ensured to all those, who duly implore it, was on this day in a very visible and miraculous manner conferred on the Apostles; the memorial

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morial whereof the Christian Church hath wisely and piously preserved, by obliging all its members to celebrate this festival, and with gladness in their hearts, and hallelujah's in their mouths to glorifie God for so invaluable, so extensive a privilege. That we may so employ our thoughts as to influence our lives, and best answer the end for which this marvelous gift was designed and bestowed, without meddling with those disputes about the nature of this Spirit, whether he be person or quality, concerning the truth of his divinity, the order or manner of his procession, which I would willingly believe in a Christian Congregation to be altogether needless. My design at present is to enlarge on these five particulars. First, I shall urge the absolute necessity of this gift to our frail, helpless, and corrupt natures. Secondly, Its wonderful power and energy from the
very

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very first dispensation down to these present times. Thirdly, The grounds we have to expect its continuance. Fourthly, Its peculiar value, privilege, and advantage. Fifthly, The sure way and means to attain and secure it.

First then, I am to urge the absolute necessity of this gift to our frail, helpless, and corrupt natures. That sin our first parents, when tempted to, did commit, the penalty consequent on that guilt, and the miseries entailed on their whole posterity rendred this gift of the Holy Spirit, and the benefits of grace not only expedient, but necessary. *When the whole world lay in wickedness, and all flesh had corrupted its way,* when the law in our members was continually moving and exciting us to evil, and the law of natural reason the only guardian and barrier to preserve our virtue, and secure our innocence, much need

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was there of a better and higher principle to correct and over-rule such depraved dispositions, such untoward propensions. To reflect on the deplorable circumstances of the *Gentile* world, as described by *St. Paul* for want of divine Grace, whose *understandings were darkned, who were alienated from the life of God*, and therefore gave themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness, must give just occasion to us who are partakers of this Grace to value and cherish, and to avoid every thing that may tend to impair, abuse, or endanger the loss of it.

We know that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing ; corrupt nature will rebel, too frequently do's, and when destitute of this restraining and over-ruling power, must always prevail. The way of man (as the Prophet argues) is not in himself, 'tis not in man that walketh to direct his steps. Ignorance in
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our minds, perverseness in our wills disorder in our affections naturally reign and prevail ; we want the capacity of thinking, much more the power and conduct of acting as we ought. *Flesh and blood cannot reveal nor enable us to discharge any part of our duty. We are not sufficient of our selves to do any thing as of our selves, but our sufficiency is of God.* There is a spiritual principle, a power from on high that can correct and supply all our natural deficiencies, whereby we may come not only to know, but to fulfil all righteousness. The hearing ear, and the understanding heart are the effects of God's quickning and enlightning Grace. 'Tis this that removes those scales of ignorance and error, this that informs and rectifies mens judgments, and replenishes the earth with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. 'Tis this that manages our corrupt and wavering

vering wills, draws them off from that evil they naturally incline to; and determines them to good. 'Tis this that works upon the affections; restrains all irregular appetites; checks all exorbitant passions; and brings them within the bounds of reason and decency, *due Government and Religion*. In short, every spiritual and *perfect gift*, every new turn of thoughts, dispositions, and desires; every better frame of words, and nobler scheme of actions *descend from above*, and are derived from him, who is both the Author and Finisher of all our good works. Our regeneration as well as creation is the work of God; if he withdraws his influence we dye and return to dust, if he takes away his Spirit we are lost to all goodness, we run into all manner of extravagance, and expose our selves to many dangerous temptations. So requisite is Grace to our spiritual
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being, even as necessary as motion and breath are to that of our natural. By this all good *men are what they are*; they begin, carry on, and accomplish their designs by virtue of this supernatural assistance, they gradually proceed *from strength to strength*, from one degree of holiness to a greater measure and perfection, and in short, from vile dust and corruption, become Saints on earth, and qualifie themselves to be Angels in Heaven.

Which leads me from the necessity of this spiritual gift, to consider Secondly, The wonderful power and energy hereof, from its very first dispensations, down to these present times. Various and considerable were the instances of the efficacious power of this spiritual gift, by virtue of faith, long before Christ's coming. We are assured, that the *Prophets of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* X Those rivers
of

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of *living water* mentioned by them, were affirmed by our Saviour to be spoken of *the Spirit*, which they that believe on him should receive. And even then he declares, that *the Holy Ghost* was not yet given, for which he assigns this reason, because that *Jesus* was not yet glorified.

But on this memorable day, this day of *Pentecost*, the Holy Spirit in a visible and remarkable manner descended on the Apostles, the immediate effect and consequence of which was, that their minds were enlightened, and they spake with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterance. They who were neither furnished with natural, nor acquir'd abilities, did yet by this demonstration of the Spirit, and power from on high, far surpass those that were celebrated for both. The foolish were hereby enabled to confound the wise, the weak to prevail over the mighty, and abundant supply was made by

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the power of the Spirit, for all manner of defects both of study and parts.

Various and marvelous were the effects of this descent of the Spirit in the earlier ages of Christianity. *St. Stephen full of the Holy Ghost did great wonders and miracles among the people.* This divine energy enabled him to preach *the glad tidings of the Gospel*, freely to discover, and as faithfully to reprehend, in order to reclaim men from *the errors of their ways.* His lot indeed was fallen in an unfair ground, and much pains was he to take with little prospect of success. 'Twas his difficult province to engage with men of corrupt and violent principles, *an evil and perverse generation*, nursed up and inured to opposition and obstinacy, *stiff-necked and uncircumcised both in heart and ears, always resisting the Holy Ghost as their fathers had done, so did they.* He resolved not

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to sooth and flatter them in their sins, but so livelily displayed, and sharply reprov'd them, that they were all cut to the heart, and gnashed upon him with their teeth. Nay, to fill up the measure of their iniquity, they stopped their ears, ran upon him with one accord, cast him out of the city, and stoned him. All which malice and cruelty were abundantly compensated by those liberal measures of supernatural assistance he was then replenish'd with, and that glorious scene before his eyes, of the heavens opening, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

No less wonderful were the marks of a divine presence and power in the conversion of St. Paul, than in the sufferings of St. Stephen. That he who breathed out such threatnings and slaughter against the disciples of Christ, who had commission from the High Priest to spare no age nor sex, nay, who verily thought it his

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duty to make havock of them all, should yet in the midst of this furious and persecuting zeal, be so soften'd by a voice from heaven, as to forbear the execution of *those threats he was breathing out against them*; that he should be *obedient to the voice*, and with the assistance of *Ananias* directed by the same power, receive the Holy Ghost; that *the scales should immediately fall from his eyes*, and that he should to the suspicion of some, the indignation of others, and astonishment of all, *preach up*, and espouse that *faith and doctrine* he so lately endeavour'd to *subvert*: These sudden and miraculous effects were the mighty workings of the Spirit, and *he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness*, darted such bright beams of the Gospel on his heart, as soon convinced and converted him from ignorance and error, to the saving knowledge and truth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

'Twas

'Twas by vertue of this power,
that the Christian Religion was at
first propagated, that *its sound went
forth into all the earth, and its words
unto the ends of the world*, that the
Apostles preaching gained nume-
rous converts, and that there were
*daily added to the Church such as should
be saved*. 'Twas this that moved
the primitive Christians to embrace
that purity and *simplicity of the Gos-
pel, which was a stumbling block to the
Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness*,
that enabled them to triumph over
all opposition, constantly to defend
it by their writings, adorn it in their
lives, and seal the truth of it with
their blood. That word of wisdom
and knowledge, those gifts of faith, of
healing, of working of miracles, of pro-
phesie, of discerning of spirits, of divers
kinds of tongues, and their interpreta-
tion too. All those diversities of gifts
so liberally bestowed on the Apostles,
came by virtue of one and the self
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same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

And although such extraordinary gifts were of course to cease at the establishment of the Gospel, yet there is still as effectual, tho' invisible a power, operating in the hearts, animating the hopes, and influencing the practice of all sincere Christians. 'Tis this that gives us an heart to love and fear God, and diligently to live after his commandments. To this 'tis that we owe both the means of grace, and hopes of glory. This enables us to persuade powerfully, to apply properly, and preach successfully, disposes you to hear attentively, to consider seriously, and practise conscientiously. Plausible rhetorick, and accurate reasonings may affect and please the ear, but 'tis this that opens the heart, unbends the will, inclines the affections, and reforms the whole man. Great and glorious are the effects

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we daily produce when the divine law is written in our hearts, not with ink, but by the Spirit of the living God. not in tables of stone, but in the fleshly tables of the heart. For tho' God poured forth his consolations in a more visible manner, and with a more liberal hand in times of persecution, and to those who suffered as Martyrs in the cause of Christ; yet *hath he not left us without witness* of his abundant grace, nor destitute of such supplies as are proper or necessary to our present *occasions*. Whence I come to consider, Thirdly, The grounds we have to expect the continuance of this so necessary, so powerful an assistance both from the gracious goodness and express promises of God himself. As the same infinite goodness that moved the Spirit of God at first to create the world, still inclines him to preserve it; so the same love and kindness that induced him to bestow, does prevail with him to
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continue this gift of the Holy Ghost, and all necessary *supplies* to our spiritual welfare. *The favour of man is deceitful, and the friendship as well as fashion of this world soon passeth away; but whom the Lord loves, he loves unto the end.* His favours are not subject to wild uncertainties, nor indeed can be. *He is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, and in him is no variableness nor shadow of turning.* 'Twas out of his abundant mercy that he *made known to the world the riches of his glory, and that mystery which had lain hid from ages and generations.* And we may justly argue with the Apostle, *he that hath not withheld from us his only begotten son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*

Those gifts of the Holy Ghost plentifully imparted and dispensed, that divine Comforter who was sent upon our blessed Saviour's Ascension

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sion into Heaven, are lasting pledges, and undoubted assurances of God's love and good will to mankind, which will be continued to all those who earnestly desire, and duly improve them, *so long as the Sun and Moon shall endure.* Agreeable to which is that assurance St. Paul gives, when he expressly declares, that the promise of the Holy Ghost was not to be confined to time or place, *but extends to us, and to our children, and to all that are afar off, even to as many as the Lord our God shall call.* His truth and veracity are engaged to fulfil this promise, and *heaven and earth may sooner pass away, than one tittle of his word shall fail.* He requires nothing at our hands, but what he affords us means sufficient to accomplish; nay, he rewards us for those works, which without his grace we should want the will to attempt, much more the power to perfect. Tho' the Apostles and primitive

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mitive Christians had more visible marks and plentiful effusions of the Holy Spirit than we at present do attain to, or need to desire ; yet no proper or necessary assistance is withheld from us. The Holy Ghost still prepares and inclines our hearts to hearken to his calls, he enables us to set about and accomplish those duties we are called to. Nor can we have better security for his continuance than the express promise of God, *My Spirit shall be with you unto the end of the world.*

But lest any through ignorance, design, or mistake should detract from this gift of Grace, and supernatural Assistance ; I proceed to shew, Fourthly, its peculiar value, privilege, and advantage. Indeed, there is no natural, nor secular privilege, which the men of the world so much court, esteem, and admire, that can possibly exceed, or be even compared with it. It adorns and
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replenishes our souls with spiritual accomplishments, *making us holy, just, and good*, which is much better than to be wise, great, or rich. 'Tis that *goodly pearl* which a wise merchant would sell all he is worth to purchase and possess; nay 'tis, in our Saviour's judgment, of so inestimable a value, as to make more than a sufficient compensation and amends for the want of his presence. *'Tis expedient for you*, says he, *that I go away, for if I go not away, the comforter will not come*. Indeed, great and considerable were the privileges and benefits they enjoyed who heard the gracious words, saw the glorious miracles, and were blessed with the light of his countenance, who as man had a fellow-feeling of their infirmities, as God could in an instant relieve them. But this gift of the Holy Spirit intimately present to all his creatures, and uniformly diffused through all things,

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things, is in some respects even preferable to those. For this is not confined to time, or place, as Christ's bodily presence was, nor do precepts or examples so strongly incline, and pow'rfully persuade, as the quickning motions, operations, and influences of this spiritual Grace. This comfortable and advantagious legacy Christ promised to send to raise the drooping hearts and disconsolate spirits of his disciples: This alone supported them under all temptations, carried them through all dangers and difficulties, and enabled them both to live and dye for their Lord.

And 'tis this that must regenerate our corrupt natures, protect us from all our ghostly enemies, comfort us under all our troubles, conduct us safely and quietly through *this vale of tears*, and prepare and qualify us for the glorious *inheritance of the saints in light*. 'Tis this
that

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that quickens us who were dead in trespasses and sins into a new birth, into a state of righteousness and true holiness. 'Tis the privilege of Grace to redeem us from those bonds, and release us from those fetters, whereby we were captivated and enslaved, so that we may justly triumph with St. Paul, *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.* This renews our minds, enobles our faculties, exalts our affections, and from mere animal men, renders us spiritual beings, from carnal and natural appetites, transforms us into holy and heavenly desires. In short, so great are the advantages which redound from hence in every state of life, to every sincere believer, in all places, and at all times, that we have just reason to celebrate this memorable day, and ascribe glory to God, who hath given such gifts unto men.

But

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But since this gracious dispensation and gift of the Holy Spirit is conditionally promised, and in consequence of our faithful performance of those terms God expects and requires: That we may not plead ignorance in so important a concern, I proceed to shew, Fifthly, The sure way and means to attain and secure it. Which are, First, Our earnest prayers and supplications to God. Secondly, Our own sincere and constant endeavours. As to the First, We know that the *preparation of the heart*, as well as formation of the body, the creation to a spiritual, no less than natural life are peculiar to God; and therefore 'tis to him we must apply either for the gift itself if we want, or that increase of it we desire. Tho' God is neither ignorant of our wants, nor at any time needs our prayers, yet since he requires and commands them, 'tis our duty to obey,

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bey, and we may justly expect that he will hear and grant all our reasonable desires. Nay, as to spiritual graces, the promise is absolute, *Ask, and ye shall receive*, and *this* (as St. John asserts) *is the confidence we have in God, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.* St. James distinctly proves, that all want of success proceeds either from the omission, or sinfulness of our prayers. *Ye fight and war*, says he, *yet ye have not, because ye ask not; ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.* If we neglect to pray, we cannot hope to have Grace, but in our petitions for this, there is no fear or danger, since hereby we both please God, and profit ourselves, who is as free to give, as we can be to receive. That Spirit which in our hearts cries *Abba Father*, whereby we have access to, and acceptance with God *helps our infirmities,*

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ties, strengthens our weakness, and, if frequently applied to, will in time replenish our souls with holy and virtuous qualities, and *make us perfect in every good word, and work.*

Good and godly men have in all ages experienced the efficacious power and prevalency of prayer, to obtain such measures of Grace as they desire, or need. Holy *David* assures us, that when *he called upon the Lord, he endued his soul with much strength.* The Prophet *Isaiah* declares, that *they who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run, and not be weary, they shall walk, and not faint.* 'Tis prayer that will remove those obstacles we fear, and procure us those blessings and assistances we desire or want. 'Tis this that will *take away the stony heart out of our flesh,* will invite God's Holy Spirit to abide and dwell with us, will cause us *to walk in his statutes,*

tutes, and keep his judgments to do them. If any man lack spiritual wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not. 'Tis prayer procures grace, and grace enriches our souls with such excellent knowledge as enables us to confound the wisest scribe, and the most politick disputers of this world.

Let us therefore draw near to God, and he will draw nigh to us ; let us invite his Holy Spirit by the purity of our hearts, the frequency and fervency of our devotions, who will graciously condescend to hear our requests, and make his abode with us. Let us not faint and grow weary, but continually pray for an increase of grace, that tho' the outward man decay, yet that we according to the riches of his glory, might be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inward man, that our souls be replenished with spiritual graces,

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our minds thoroughly furnished, and our hearts duly disposed unto all good works.

But since the tribute of our lips will not be sufficient, nay is bare prevarication and mockery without the obedience of our lives, let us to our earnest prayers for this gift of the Holy Spirit add, Secondly, Our sincere and constant endeavours.

Tho' both in the formation of our bodies and salvation of our souls the power is from God, yet there is this remarkable difference that we were merely passive in the former, but must be active in the latter. 'Tis readily acknowledged, that the ability we have to do any manner of good proceeds from God, but then the act must be our own. 'Tis from the Lord we receive both the will and power, but then we are required to exert these, and *give all diligence to make our calling and election sure.* God

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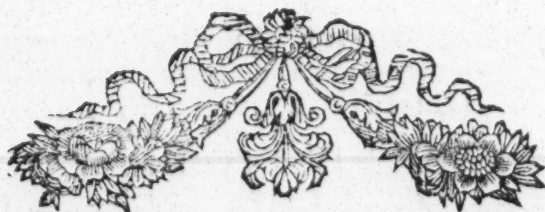
hath created us free agents, hath set before us good, and evil, life, and death, and left it to our own liberty which we will chuse. Tho' divine grace is promised to all those who apply the due means, and sincerely desire it, yet it never irresistibly works against our wills, nor will be dispensed without our endeavours. As there must be much study as well as bright parts to render us expert scholars: so there must be industry as well as grace to make us good Christians. As in nature the improvement is gradual, *the earth bringing forth first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the earth.* So in religion we are at first mere *babes in Christ*, afterwards by our own earnest endeavours, and the assistance of grace arrive at higher degrees and larger proportions of spiritual knowledge, till at last *we come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*

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We are not only distinguished from the brutes by reason, and reflection, but there is this difference between us, and even the Angels themselves, that their happiness was bestowed by the mere goodness of God without their endeavours, whereas we have the pleasure and privilege of being the active instruments of our own salvation. And O let us not neglect nor abuse this privilege, but employ our chief time and pains in such improvements of grace and religious exercises, that God may be glorified, the number of Christians enlarged, their manners reformed, and all *our souls saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.* Let us consider that they who finally lose grace and all hopes of salvation, cannot justly charge God, but must blame their own negligence and stupidity for so irreparable a loss. Natural barrenness cannot always be prevented, but spiritual may. As to the former there

there are many casual obstacles, but as to the latter, the proper means and necessary assistances are daily offered: so that nothing but our own sloth or obstinacy can obstruct our improvement. We have the commands of God to labour after grace, clouds of examples in holy writ to encourage us to this duty, and sundry promises to assure us, that *in due time we shall reap, if we faint not.* We know the honours, riches, and pleasures of the world are not worthy to be compared with the privileges of grace, and surely those which deserve least, ought not to employ most of our time, our endeavours, and thoughts. *The times of refreshing are at hand,* God hath shed abroad in our hearts the gracious influences of his Holy Spirit, and expressly promised it to all those who faithfully ask, and diligently seek it. The blessed comforter is come whom the Father hath sent

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in the Son's name, who shall teach us
all things and lead us into all truth.
Let not us through negligence cool,
through resistance grieve, through
presumption tempt, or resolved ob-
stinacy reject him, but let us invite
him with clean hearts, holy desires,
and fervent prayers, that by the
light and succour he affords we
may have a right judgment in all
things, and evermore rejoyce in his
holy comfort, through the merits
of *Christ Jesus* our Saviour, who li-
veth and reigneth with thee in the
unity of the same Spirit, one God,
world without end. *Amen.*



S E R-



SERMON XI

Preach'd at the

ROYAL-CHAPEL

At St. JAMES's 1712.

Pfal. 16. ver. iii.

*To the saints that are in the
earth, and to the excellent in
whom is all my delight: (Or,
as in the other Version)
All my delight is upon the
saints*

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*saints that are in the earth,
and upon such as excel in
virtue.*



AS Man was formed a sociable creature, the faculties of his soul, and appetites of his body, naturally affecting company, and declining solitude; so 'tis of the highest consequence both to our temporal and eternal happiness to make a right choice, to fix upon a wise and solid foundation, Now Religion and Vertue being the best, the safest and most durable groundwork we can possibly make, all our actions and designs, nay, the whole bent of our conversation, should as their proper center, incline to, and by all futable methods endeavour to promote these. Instead of those vain, frothy, and to say no worse, unprofitable discourses, wherein too
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many mispend their chief time and thoughts, we should exercise our selves in things serious and useful, and be daily promoting others and our own salvation. Instead of courting the witty, flattering the rich, or cringing to the great, we should seek and value the conversation of the godly, and *all our delight should be upon the Saints that are in the earth, and upon such as excel in virtue.*

From which words I propose to insist on these four particulars. First, I shall endeavour to shew of how great concern it is through the whole course of our lives, to be discreet and wary in the choice of our companions and Friends. Secondly, We should take the greatest delight and complacency in the most intimate acquaintance of, and familiarity with those whom the Psalmist here styles *Saints in the earth, and such as excel in virtue.* Thirdly, We must
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be sincere in all our professions of friendship, and oblige our selves to such a constancy as is consistent with our duty. Fourthly and Lastly, I shall discover the great advantages of a religious conversation and friendship, both here and hereafter.

First then I shall endeavour to shew of how great concern it is, through the whole course of our lives, to be discreet and wary in the choice of our companions and friends. As to live comfortably and creditably in this world, and be eternally bless'd and happy in the next, are the most valuable privileges we are capable of; so there is nothing tends more to secure and promote these, than contracting an early correspondence and friendship with religious men. To be therefore void of all scruple, careless, and indifferent in so important a concern, argues the greatest weakness and grossest stupidity. We must
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make frequent trials, consult the various dispositions of mens souls, examine and approve the conformity of their manners, before we can admit them as our constant companions and bosom friends.

Indeed the general concerns of the world, and particular duties of our stations, which we can neither with prudence nor innocence neglect, frequently oblige us to promiscuous correspondence, and make it necessary for us to converse both with bad and good men. Nay, it may so fall out, that in justice to our selves, or charity to others, we must admit of the company, even of the most profligate sinners. Yet where 'tis necessity and constraint, not inclination and choice, it quite alters the case. Nay, between civility and familiarity there is a wide difference, the manner of treating such as men, and embracing them as friends. The exchange of visits, mutual ceremonies

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remonies and respect, according to the rules of decency, and in compliance with the fashions of the country where we live, may, if sincere, be very innocently and commendably used. But such formalities, at best, when hearty and well design'd, and I wish there were less occasion to complain of the abuse, are by no means to be compared with the agreeable charms and delightful freedoms of friendship. They who are capable of, and in all respects duly qualified for the former, are not worthy of the latter.

— Virtue and merit are the essential qualifications which we must always seek and aim at in our companions and friends. These must recommend them to our judgments, and endear them to our affections, or we shall proceed but upon a very weak and precarious foundation. Humour and fancy, interest and convenience, are too low and igno-
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ble motives to guide and govern us in the choice of our friends. We prostitute the sacred name and character of friendship, when we usurp it upon such weak and slender pretences. No wonder if bands so superficially twisted, soon burst asunder, and are easily broken.

To make society and friendship real and durable blessings, we must act upon rational and prudential grounds, must take due time to consider and prove, before we determine our consent and choice. For we may easily be deceived by outward appearances and over zealous pretences, and by fixing in haste, must submit to the sad consequence of repenting at leisure. To love passionately at first sight, and enter into solemn leagues of friendship with those whose behaviour and temper we are unacquainted with, betrays an apparent weakness, rashness and folly. 'Tis the wise man's advice,

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advice, *Prove a friend first, and be not hasty to credit.* If we are wary and scrupulous in every purchase we make, or piece of money we receive, much more ought we to be so in that most valuable treasure, and greatest of temporal blessings, the choice of our friends. We must dive into the deepest recesses of mens souls, and make the strictest scrutiny into their manners and lives, before we can wisely and securely trust them. A sound judgment, an agreeable humour, and unbiass'd integrity are very noble accomplishments, such as best become and adorn friendship, and must render it the most glorious and happy union. But ignorance, ill nature, and above all, vice and immorality, are inconsistent with, and destructive of friendship. 'Tis scarce possible to be easy with either of the two former, or safe with the latter.

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Some there are who contend for an entire conformity in temper, and equality of fortunes, as requisite ingredients: But I cannot think these essentially necessary, either to the happiness or duration of friendship. Perfectly to unite and agree in our sentiments, to have the same affections and appetites, and in every thing to conform to the humour of our friends, is by no law required, nor could well be complied with. In matters of an indifferent nature, as well as in stature and complexion, we may freely disagree without offence to society, or violation of friendship. As variety of opinions and judgments may sometimes rather adorn, than spoil conversation; so a different relish of things may more improve than impair the satisfactions of life. The aery and sprightly often need some allay, the melancholy and phlegmatick, support and comfort; and 'tis the office

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fice of a friend to curb the impetuous rashness or wantonness of the former, to raise and revive the drooping spirits of the latter, which, were he always of the same humour, he would be incapable of.

And as an entire conformity in temper is not necessary to friendship, so neither is equality of fortunes. ~~For~~ supposing virtue to be the cement, superiors and inferiors may commendably unite, and ever live and love as dear companions and friends. There may be freedom in conversation, and familiarity of behaviour, as well among these, as those who are of the most exact equality and level. Superiors need only be easy of access, affable and obliging in their manner of deportment, to invite the affections of inferiors, and engage mutual endearments. Inferiors should be cautious, especially in publick, of intrenching upon the rules of good breeding and

and decency; they must then keep their distance, and observe due distinction; whereas in private, they may be allowed all the intimacy and freedom that friendship requires, or their own hearts could wish. The inward qualities of the mind are more to be regarded than the outward badges of fortune, and they who are adorned with the former, tho' they want the latter, are worthy of esteem. They who are wise will distinguish the godly as well in the lowest as highest station, and when reason and religion are the springs that move, they will either find or make an equality. What I chiefly contend for, is that piety and virtue be the foundation of our friendship; and then whether between superiors and inferiors, or only equals, it cannot fail being durable and happy. And 'tis certainly our highest interest and duty to be exceeding cautious in a concern,

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whereon so much of our present peace and future happiness depends.

I proceed now to shew Secondly, That we should take the greatest delight and complacency in the most intimate acquaintance of, and familiarity with those whom the Psalmist here stiles *saints on the earth, and such as excel in virtue*. Indeed to be constantly concerned both in our publick and private intercourses with good men, and always to hear spiritual and uncorrupt conversation, would be to live like Angels, and enjoy as it were even an heaven upon earth. Which perfection of happiness, tho' unattainable in this mortal and imperfect state, yet we ought to desire and labour after the highest degrees and nearest approaches we are capable of. We cannot contract too near an intimacy with those who *excel in virtue, and religious accomplishments*. We should omit no opportunities, either in

in seeking or improving such acquaintance and friendship, whereby we may receive both delight and profit. *As the hart panteth after the water brooks,* so our souls should long to be united to those *who order their behaviour and conversation aright.* We should with pleasure affect, and even fondness desire to be companions of *those who fear God, and keep his commandments.* The beauty of holiness, the agreeable charms, and delightful freedoms of religious friendship, are not only beyond expression, but even imagination itself. The joys that spring from so pure a stream, so blessed an union, are more lively felt than can be described. *All the Psalmist's delight was upon the saints in the earth, and such as excel in virtue. He was glad when they said unto him, we will go into the house of the Lord.* The righteous and holy resorted to his company, and the satisfactions he took in the presence and

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conversation of these, were his best entertainments. Nay, 'tis probable those were exemplary patterns of righteousness and holiness, whose absence he thus bemoans; *My lovers and friends hast thou put away from me, and hid mine acquaintance out of my sight.*

Indeed worldly conversation is for the general part so insipid or ensnaring, that they who are wise can scarce hear it with patience, or they who are weak entertain it without hazard. But religious and pious conversation is always safe, and seldom fails to afford abundance of delight. *They savour best the things that be of God,* make a right judgment of, and truly relish pious and spiritual discourses, who with most eagerness desire, and most complacency enjoy them. The pious ear is *never satisfied with hearing* those heavenly entertainments, which yield so much pleasure, and cause such wonderful improvements. 'Tis a lauda-

laudable covetousness, when these only are the objects, nor can we too passionately affect, or too zealously pursue them. Familiarity with such can never be excessive, nor any way tend to expose or betray us. The more we frequent the company of the godly, the more we see of their holiness, and partake of their goodness, the more they will endear themselves to our inclinations, and engage our hearts and affections. There are charms in religious conversation and friendship, too well known to need to be explained, too engaging to be resisted. An union both of judgment and affection founded on religious principles, and improved by virtuous conversation, must needs make an agreeable and delightful harmony. *How joyful and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in godly union and friendship. To meet frequently, and declare the wonders*

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of the Lord, *what he hath done* for all, and each of *our souls*, to contemplate the manifold blessings we have receiv'd, and various dangers we have escap'd, amidst the changes and chances of this mortal life, must fill both our heads and our hearts with gratitude, and make us chearfully unite in *rejoicing in the Lord, and joying in the God of our salvation*. The joys at harvest, and triumphs of *those who divide the spoil*; the entertainments of the wealthy, and facetious mirth of the witty, are not worthy to be compared with the delights and pleasures that flow from these religious assemblies. Those mighty advocates for mirth, who would confine Religion to the Church and Closet, and cannot bear the thought or name of it in company, under a false imputation and groundless notion of rendering conversation disagreeable and insipid, and making society dull, melancholy

and moping, know but little of the nature, and less of the practical delights of holiness. They who *excel in virtue*, may excel too in a sprightly wit, an entertaining genius, and other pleasing accomplishments; and surely conversation is not less agreeable for being innocent, nor less acceptable for being useful. Religion do's not destroy, it rather improves those satisfactions and pleasures God and nature allow and qualifie us to enjoy. If unity in judgment, interest, and affection are essential to the being, the addition of virtue is no less necessary to the happiness of friendship. Without this there may be a society, but *the chief corner-stone is wanting*, which is absolutely requisite to its welfare and security.

A late free, corrupt, and insolent Author among his other as groundless, as calumnious aspersions on the Gospel, upbraids it with deficiency
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in respect of friendship, which he allows to be taught and recommended by *Epicurus* as the most divine of all virtues, but no where throughout the whole Evangelical system particularly required; and therefore advises us to have recourse to heathen Moralists to supply the defects of Christianity. The main stress of his bold assertion seems grounded on this, that the word *friendship* in the sense we understand it, is no where made use of in the *Epistles, Gospels, or Acts of the Apostles*. But tho' the name be not expressed, yet, is not the sense of it enjoined? do's not the Gospel advance it to a much nobler height than morality ever did, or is capable of doing? Are we not taught there to be kindly affectionate one to another? Is not love to our brethren the commandment of Christ? Nay, that distinguishing mark whereby all men shall know that we are his disciples?

ples? Is it not required that our love be without dissimulation, not in word, nor in tongue only, but in deed, and in truth? Are we not exhorted above all things to have fervent charity among our selves, to continue, to increase, and to abound in love? Do's not St. Paul beseech us by that endearing appellation of brethren, nay, by that name, which ought to be to us above every name, the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that there be no divisions among us, but that we be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and the same judgment? Were not the multitude of Christian converts in the Acts of one heart and of one soul? And are not all of us enjoined to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, and with one mind and one mouth to glorifie God? Are not they pronounced foolish and disobedient who live in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another? Nay, is not he who hateth his brother pronounced
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a murderer? Do not these and other passages of the like nature, which 'twere easie, if necessary to produce great variety of, prescribe and require friendship in its highest perfection? Ought we (according to this Author's modest partiality, and free manner of complimenting his Christian brethren) to have so high a veneration of *Epicurus*, who taught only in part, what we have explained to us and enforced in its utmost latitude and extent? Had he and his followers (whose praises he sets forth in such an unparallell'd lustre) this noble quality in so high a perfection, as Christ and his members, whom he emphatically stiles not his *servants*, but *friends*? Do not Christians at least allow the most refined systems of Philosophy to be much inferior to the Gospel, and comparatively fruitless and barren? Is not this Author *a free writer*, as well as *a free thinker* in charging that with

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deficiency, which the *Canons* of our Church and *Articles* of our Religion acknowledge to be a compleat rule both of faith and manners, which St. James stiles *a perfect law of liberty*, and whereby St. Paul assures us that *we may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works*? Surely he could never think to impose upon the world by such weak sophistry, nor scarce even upon himself, had not God sent him *a very strong delusion to believe a lye*, and at once to discover his want of good sense and good manners, as well as religion; all which throughout this whole system are so glaringly manifest, that some who were before very tender of his credit, and too moderate at least in declaring their sentiments, now *display their banners*, and appear against him as strenuously and zealously as any. But whatever corrupt and degrading notions this Author and his abettors may entertain of religion; yet, *bles-*
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sed be God, we have not so learned Christ, and therefore let not us fail of making the rules of Christianity and the precepts of the Gospel the foundation of our friendship, which wise and happy choice we shall never have reason to repent of, or desire to exchange ; but having our hearts surely fixed there where true joys are to be found, we need not fear any excess either in enjoying them too long, or indulging them too much.

I come now to shew, Thirdly, That we must be sincere in all our professions of friendship, and oblige our selves to such a constancy as is consistent with our duty. Sincerity of heart is so essential a quality, that without this we can neither be good Christians, nor true friends, we cannot procure the favour of God, or good will of men. To exclude so valuable a virtue from conversation and society, would be
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to poison and corrupt the noblest satisfactions, and render life itself rather a burden than comfort. Our words are the usual interpreters of our thoughts, and our actions of our designs ; but when these are disguised and basely misapplied, we can neither judge with safety, converse with freedom, nor practice with pleasure.

We are fallen into an age which from a strange affectation and pretence to better breeding, has lost very much of its primitive simplicity. True friendship is now grown as rare, as the name and outward profession are general and common. 'Tis in the mouths of most, but in the minds and hearts only of few ; 'tis frequently profer'd and accepted, but little understood, and practiced less. I am far from condemning the rules of civility, and good manners, I am only sorry they have prevailed so far at the expence of sincerity.

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A due regard to these is both expedient and necessary, but the extravagant use and abuses of them are needless and nauseous. We may observe decency without degenerating into flattery, and shew civility too at a less rate than with the loss of sincerity. We ought never to sacrifice so valuable a quality to the corrupt custom of the times, nor servilely *follow a multitude to do evil*. A principle of conscience and friendship to the truth should over-rule in our hearts, and influence our practice. We should not affect the bare name, and court the shadow of friendship, when we are strangers to the substance, but should always endeavour and desire to be *Israelites indeed in whom is no guile*.

Nor are we to take up our professions of affection and friendship by fits and starts, but must oblige our selves to such a constancy as is consistent with our duty. I add
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this reserve because those that were good, and then worthy of our choice may possibly fall off and tempt us to evil; and a separation may be necessary where the union is hazardous, since *we ought always to obey God rather than man*. However when we see those whom we passionately love *making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience*, we should endeavour to reason them out of those poisonous principles, and dissuade them from such evil courses; we should continually warn them of their danger, and timely *pluck them, if possible, like brands out of the fire*; nay, we should exhaust all our counsels, exhortations, and reproofs before we desert them. Fickleness and inconstancy render us odious to God, and infamous to the world, which should make us always take heed to our ways and works, and not deserve such reproach. *David* resents it with more than ordi-

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nary concern, that he should be forsaken by one who was his guide, his companion, and his own familiar friend. 'Twas a severe exercise and trial of the patience of Job that his very friends and comforters should prove his worst tormentors. And that monster of ingratitude will never be forgotten, who tho' he was trusted with the bag, and eat bread at his Lord's table, yet treacherously lifted up his heel against him.

Indeed, such as are friends upon false principles and motives, like the chaff before the wind are soon scattered and dispersed. They are continually given to change, and no longer abide than the ends of their profit and their pleasure last. Hence Jerusalem, which was so much courted in her grandeur, in her afflictions complains, *That among all her lovers, she had none to comfort her, all her friends dealt treacherously with her, they became her enemies.* But such

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as are friends upon an honest and religious principle are so at all times, and both their lives and affections expire together. They scorn those base arts which interest suggests; their friendship (like the vestal fire) continues pure and clear to the end, and, *like the morning light, shines more and more unto a perfect day.*

David and Jonathan were dear companions, and friends, *lovely and pleasant in their lives*, and faithful even to *death*, which alone could divide them. In how affectionate a manner does the one lament and bemoan the loss of the other, *I am distressed for thee my brother Jonathan*, and yet we doubt not but he inwardly felt more than he was able to express. Nay, not only in scripture, but history too, and even heathen authors, there are examples of those who might serve to upbraid and shame many Christians out of their scandalous inconstancy. The

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only way for us left to be reproach'd the less, is to practice the more ;

To promote which, I proceed, Fourthly and Lastly, To discover the great advantages of a religious conversation and friendship both here and hereafter. To converse freely and contract an intimacy with those who are wise and good, jointly tends to promote both our present comfort, and our future happiness. Our hearts and souls are hereby spiritually nourished, as our bodies are by natural refreshments. *Whoso finds a religious and faithful friend finds a great treasure..* 'Tis an unspeakable privilege to communicate our thoughts, and unbosom our selves to one, who is so able and willing to do us good. There is scarce any blessing we can desire or enjoy that may not thus be accomplished. There is scarce any misery we can feel or fear, which may not thus be relieved. In every state of life,

life, in plenty, or poverty, in honour, or dishonour, in health, or sickness, in pleasure, or pain, what nobler comfort, or stronger support can we wish for or obtain than a wise, religious, and conscientious friend? His pious example, wholesome counsels, and seasonable reproofs will quicken us to good, and restrain us from evil, will compose us in prosperity, and support us under adversity, will sweeten our enjoyments, and soften our griefs, will regulate our appetites, suppress our passions, and make us happy in ourselves, and agreeable to others. So that tho' interest ought not to be the ground, yet is it generally the natural fruit and almost necessary consequence of religious friendship.

Nor do's it only sanctifie and advance the satisfactions of this life, but tends to secure and promote the happiness of the next. When we are united to each other by all

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the endearments and engagements that relation or affection can possibly suggest, yet sooner or later death must separate and burst these bonds. But religion, even after death, will make us meet again, and there renew and perfect that friendship in heaven which commenced here on earth. *Now we know only in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known.* Our imperfect degrees of knowledge and love shall be improved to the most perfect and intimate union; nay, that fear of exceeding the due bounds of affection so very dangerous here, *shall be then no more.* All things shall concur which our regenerate natures and spiritualized faculties can either wish for, or want, to compleat our felicity: More than mortal beings can possibly comprehend, and as much as spirits immortal are capable of shall be our lot and portion in those blissful regions.

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'Tis a question which many are very curious and fond of being satisfied about, whether they shall be able to distinguish their friends and relations in the other world, which may very positively be resolved in their favour, and absolutely depended on, so far as may serve to advance their happiness, which in heaven must be *perfect and entire, wanting nothing*. Indeed, the nature of our change, and the vast difference there must be between *earthly and glorified bodies*, must make it impossible for us to discern men by any outward distinctions; and therefore (as St. Paul justly argues) *Henceforth know we no man after the flesh*: But 'tis more than probable that we shall distinguish our spiritual friends, more especially those who were any way instrumental to this glorious salvation: Nay, many whose examples and writings we have faithfully copied after, tho' we never personally

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saw, and there under a new and much nobler relation, as *heirs of the promise, and children of the most high all rejoice together.* And Oh, what tongue is able to express, or what heart conceive the mutual rejoicings and gratulatory triumphs of this second interview! When those happy souls who made it their constant study, delight, and practice to glorifie God, and do good in their generation, shall *then enter into the joy of their Lord,* and receive the rewards of their faithful services: When that religious society, *the spirits of just men made perfect,* shall all assemble together, and welcom one another to those blessed mansions where is perfect peace and consummate blis: When they are assured that there shall be no interruption or end of their happiness, but that in such exquisite joys, and such glorious communion they must pass away an eternity. What zeal, what

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at St. James's Chapel. 345

emulation should such prospects create? what less than the dedication of our whole bodies and souls, nay, every moment of our lives can suffice for such endless, such inestimable blessings? So great are the advantages of uniting in the love and practice of religion to our bodies here and our souls hereafter.

Let us therefore timely take heed to our words and works, that we *glorifie God*, and be agreeable and useful to those with whom we converse and live. *Let no corrupt communication ever proceed out of our mouths, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers, and be a savour of life unto life, and not a savour of death unto death.* Let us seek, chuse, and delight in such companions and friends as may *provoke us to good works, perfect us in holiness, and in the fear of God*, and render us truly
wise,

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wise, even *wise unto salvation*. In short, Let us in every scene of our lives diligently study, zealously endeavour, and earnestly pray that we may prove *such manner of persons as we ought to be, in all holy conversation and godliness*. Thus *adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*, and excelling others in every virtuous quality, we shall be exalted to proportionable degrees of happiness, and when we remove, as shortly we all must, from the delightful company of these, who are saints here on earth, shall have the comfortable lot to be numbered with *blessed saints in glory everlasting*.

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S E R-



SERMON XII.

Preach'd at the

ROYAL-CHAPEL

At St. JAMES's 1712.

1 Cor. 15. 13.

*Evil communications corrupt good
manners.*



THAT excellent faculty of
speech, and the privileges
of a free conversation and
correspondence, are the
peculiar advantages whereby we are
disting-

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distinguished from the sensitive and irrational part of the creation, which render our condition and circumstances here, not only tolerable, but pleasant, without which life it self were a burden, and 'twere *better* for us *we had never been born*. For, to think freely, and yet not be able to communicate those thoughts, must undoubtedly prove a very great uneasiness. *Our hearts* (as the Psalmist expresses it) *would*, as it were, *burn within us*. 'Twou'd be *a great pain and grief* to curb and suppress the inward workings of our souls, and we should even wish to be exempt from that capacity of reasoning and reflecting, if debarred the power and benefit of conversing. Indeed next to an heavenly conversation, and that happiness of *seeing* and enjoying God (as the Apostle expresses it) *face to face*, an holy and virtuous one here lays the nearest claim to our regard; which is as it were a pledge and fore-

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foretaste of that raising and elevating our souls to the most perfect bliss our imperfect natures are capable of.

But as the corruption of the best things is always the worst; so there is nothing more at enmity with God, more repugnant to true christian piety, or a greater reproach to humanity, than the abuse of this faculty in any irregular manner, or to unlawful ends. For who is ignorant of the malignant influence and destructive consequences of the tongue when it grows unruly, and *how great a matter this little fire kindleth.* St. James assures us *tis a world of iniquity, it defiles the whole body, sets on fire the whole course of nature, and is set on fire of hell.* And to prove that St. Paul and St. James perfectly agree in this point, we need go no farther than the assertion of my Text, *Evil communications corrupt good manners.*

'Tis

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'Tis far from my purpose to propose or suggest any thing which may in the least tend to prejudice society, a privilege graciously contrived, and wisely instituted by God, and subservient to many excellent ends of providence. My design is only to persuade men to render it as innocent and useful as it is agreeable. Nor am I willing so very strictly to be understood as to pronounce all manner of keeping company, even with wicked men, to be unlawful and sinful. No, there are seasons when 'tis not only no sin, but even duty it self, and the discharge of many civil and christian offices oblige us to converse with them. That therefore we may not err on *the right hand, or the left*, nor for fear of offending in one extreme, become guilty of another; let us distinguish in what respects the conversation of wicked men is allowable and necessary, and wherein 'tis unlawful.

unlawful; that being fearful both of omitting or exceeding what we ought to do, we may proceed only so far, but no farther, may discharge the duty, and yet avoid the sin.

And here what I shall in the first place observe, is, that to avoid the company of evil men, we are not to sequester our selves from all manner of society, and retire into cells. This, however it may be practiced and defended by some, is what neither reason nor scripture require at our hands. 'Tis as inexpedient now as 'twas pronounced by God in the beginning of the world, *that man should be alone*; he has faculties formed and fitted for society, and capable thereby of the noblest improvements. 'Tis no less an argument of a low and degenerate nature, than 'tis of a disingenuous and ungrateful spirit to conceal those gifts and graces, whereby we may be useful. Next to that of employ-
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ing them to ill ends and purposes, is the sin of making them subservient to none at all; and therefore the slothful servant in the Gospel was so severely handled for neglecting his talent, that he could scarce have suffered more if he had mispent it. As we were not born only for our selves, so 'tis not reasonable that we should wholly live and act in regard to our selves. 'Tis very meet and right, that the light of our good works (like the beams of the sun) should display its lustre, and extend its influence, and what may be profitable to any, should be communicated to all.

Nor is this the voice only of reason, but revelation too. Let those who *make* such *proud boasting*, and stile themselves such mighty advocates of scripture, produce any precept or precedent to justify this their practice. Are we not there enjoined to do all the good we can, to seek
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out and embrace all proper opportunities of promoting God's glory, and the publick good? And is this consistent with sequestering our selves from all manner of society, and retiring into cells and caves of the earth, where we may too be wicked, and can be at best but useless? Do not the scriptures in exprefs words declare *woe to him that is alone*, and demonstrate the danger of living in such a state, wherein some groundlessly place an high degree of perfection? Can they shew us any precedent to countenance this their practice? Will the examples of our Saviour and John Baptist serve them in any stead? No, they did not confine themselves to a wilderness, but preached the Gospel in the most publick places, and *continually went about doing good*. However therefore they, with as little reason as truth, may applaud themselves, and condemn us; let not us be deceived; We

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have no such command, nor (thanks be to God) any such custom indulged in our reformed Churches.

And as we are not to sequester our selves from all manner of society, to avoid the dangerous infection of those that are evil; so neither are we strictly and absolutely forbid the presence and conversation of all wicked men; since as times are now grown, there's no living without being sometimes in their company; and to use the language of the Apostle, *we must needs go out of the world*, if we resolve never to converse with them.

What therefore I shall Secondly observe and lay down, is, that we are not to decline the company even of wicked men, where the necessary offices of life, or those of common civility deserve our assistance, or require our compliance. Whilst we sojourn in this world, if we have eyes and ears, we must be subject to
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righteous *Lot's* unhappy fate, and shall have too frequent occasions to vex our souls in seeing mens ungodly deeds, and hearing their wicked blasphemies. Indeed in matters of commerce, and other affairs of this life, which depend upon numbers, and are of general concern, it may often so fall out, that we can neither be just to our selves, nor serviceable to others, if we altogether refuse to join company with ungodly men. And are we at any time, or in any place to decline the duties of righteousness and charity? Is it not lawful to dispute our title, to defend our right, and as nearly and equally as we can to adjust and rectify matters with all sorts of men, which without the personal appearance and conference of both parties, cannot well be decided? Should the righteous and holy vainly imagine it more safe to relinquish their right, than endanger their souls by

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the conversation and company of wicked men, how furiously would they rage against, and lord it over them. There would never be wanting *sons of Belial*, falsely to accuse, were good men thus scrupulous and afraid to answer for themselves. But blessed be God, Religion *binds no such heavy burdens*. We may have *fellowship* with wicked men in secular concerns, and yet not partake of *their works of darkness*, we may freely converse with them upon necessary occasions, and be reconciled to their persons, and yet not to their vices.

Nay, Religion, which adorns and refines our manners, polishing not only our inward dispositions, but outward behaviour prescribes a due respect and deference to mens persons and stations. When we accidentally fall into the company of those, whose principles and morals are corrupt and loose, 'tis our duty then to be cautious and circumspect,
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and neither to incur the guilt of basely complying, nor the just imputation of being rude and unmannerly. 'Twill well become us then to exercise *the wisdom of the serpent*, as well as retain the *innocence of the dove*. Both are prescribed, and may be discharged; we may shew our good breeding, and our courage too; we may quit our selves like discreet and civilized men, and yet act as Christians.

But Thirdly, 'Tis our duty to seek out fair and proper opportunities, and endeavour by all prudent means we can, to reclaim men from their sins. This indeed is a very critical province, requires conduct and care, and belongs only to those who are furnished with such measures of knowledge and grace, that they may hope to convince and reform others without much fear or danger of being corrupted themselves. 'Tis discretion in chusing

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out proper seasons, and applying suitable and successful means that must direct and govern us, otherwise, instead of our bettering them, they may triumph over, and seduce us. We know *our Saviour* frequently conversed with *Publicans and sinners*; but then as he was *free from all manner of guile*, so he was likewise from all danger of infection too. As 'twas the end of his coming, so 'tis certainly our duty, who are to follow his steps, *to call sinners to repentance, because they that are whole need not a Physician*; But then we are not to forget his advice and caution too. *Cast not your pearls before swine, since the best that they can do, will be to trample them under their feet, and 'tis well if they do not turn again, and rent you.*

Indeed when we too confidently rely upon our own strength, and by an ill-timed and unwary charity to other mens souls, endanger our
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own; when we refuse to follow the Apostles advice, *Be not high minded, but fear.* What we suffer thereby, as 'twas perfectly our own indiscreet choice, and rather the result of obstinacy, than reason, will be unpitied by men, and unrewarded by God, *who hath no pleasure in fools,* but will expostulate *who hath required these things at your hands?* Whereas if we honestly design, and as far as our reason and experience will permit, prudently endeavour to reclaim sinners; If out of love to our neighbours, which (some will have to be equal to that we owe to our selves, all agree must be like) we hazard our own spiritual estate to reform theirs; Where the danger on our sides is not apparently great, and we use all proper preservatives against infection, 'tis, and must be allowed a very commendable charity, such an one as will entitle us to the divine protection, well be-

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comes both the study and practice of wise and good men, and *shall in no wise lose its reward*, tho' it may sometimes fall short of a successful issue.

Having considered in what respects the company of wicked men is allowable and necessary, I proceed in the next place to shew when and how it becomes unlawful and sinful.

Now the conversation of wicked men becomes unlawful and sinful, when we make it our choice, delight, and customary practice. We are all liable to, and frequently fall into dangers against both our wills and our endeavours too; but who will pity those who voluntarily rush into snares, and as it were, court their own ruin. Whatever good reasons may render the company of wicked men occasionally lawful, expedient or necessary, yet no obligations whatever can justify our choice or delight in it. If we
desire

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desire to secure our innocence, and keep our selves unspotted from the world, we must be very discreet and wary in the choice of our company; And tho' upon some occasions we may and must admit of the ungodly, yet the righteous only should resort unto our company.

And as in general we are to avoid, not walk in the way of sinners, to hate, not delight in the congregations of the wicked, to forsake, not frequent the assemblies of the ungodly: So there are some, whose conversation we are more particularly warned to flee from, whose words (as the Apostle expresses it) eat as doth a Canker-worm, and whose company the more we frequent, we shall be sure to increase unto more ungodliness. And these, are all scoffers and hypocrites, the professed and disguised adversaries of God and Religion.

'Tis the business of scoffers to ridicule every thing that is sacred and serious,

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serious, to charge the ministry with Priestcraft, and upbraid all believers as passive fools, as abandoning their native rights, and forfeiting that glorious name and privilege of free-thinkers.

O my soul come not thou into their assemblies; have thou nothing to do with these stools of wickedness, which imagine mischief as a law! these tyrants who have not God before their eyes, and therefore draw out their swords to slay such as are of a right conversation. 'Tis very dangerous to sit in these seats of the scornful; those artful ways they have of insinuating their profane ralleries, corrupt and beguile unstable souls. Many who have resisted other snares and temptations, have been overcome by these; and tho' they could not be reasoned or argued, yet have been led into scepticism and infidelity. But of all seducers we are chiefly warned to avoid and beware of hypocrites,

pocrites, who appear in the habit of *sheeps clothing* that they may have the more pow'r and opportunity of being *ravening wolves*. When men in their conversation profess fairly, yet design and act dishonestly, or by their writings pretend to be advocates for *the Church*, when they basely undermine it, confuting through their whole system what they advance in *the title page*: However, they may be carested by some, who are well wishers to such principles, yet must needs be infamous to all, who have right notions of honour, or any regard to conscience, and therefore ought to be avoided as a publick contagion. These are the pestilences which artfully insinuated and adapted to a vicious age *destroy by noon day*, which encouraging under a specious name and form of *Godliness*, 'tis to be feared thousands and ten thousands have fallen a sacrifice to.

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We are therefore to mark the broachers of such pestilent notions, nay, those who at any time seem to recommend or defend them in our company. We are to look upon them not only as *despisers of government*, and enemies to all religion, but such as more particularly form their designs against us, and shun them as those, who by their *slight and cunning craftiness, lie in wait for our souls*.

Indeed, reason and experience abundantly evince how naturally *evil communications* tend to *corrupt* and debauch both our morals and principles. For having the seeds of sin through the degeneracy of our first parents entailed upon, and remaining in us, which close in with their depraved and vicious conversation; however, we may at first condemn their ways, yet we are insensibly drawn off from that averſeness and dislike, and by too frequently and fami-

familiarly conversing with, become tempted at lest not only to approve of what they say, but practice what they do. Many and plausible are the pretences, various and dexterous are the ways, whereby these advocates of vice, these emissaries of *Satan* endeavour to delude and ensnare those they converse with. As the heart is the chief source and fountain, whence the good or bad actions of our lives immediately flow: so 'tis the principle fort against which wicked men exert their utmost power, and play their strongest batteries. They consult mens complexions, inclinations, and passions, work upon their weakest parts, insinuate and recommend their most darling lusts, enticing them by degrees *from one wickedness to another*, till at last they taint and *defile the whole inward man*. And when once through their subtle insinuations they have prevailed over
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the heart, and debauched mens manners, they doubt not but they shall lead their *understandings* and judgments *captive at their wills*. When by *evil communications* they have corrupted their practices, and made them immoral, they will soon affect their principles, and cause them to turn prophane and atheistical. For having already *made shipwreck of a good conscience*, their faith has not sufficient ballast to support itself, but must sink of course.

Indeed, the thoughts of religion and a future state will sit very uneasy and burthenfom upon them, and since 'tis for their interest and peace to wish there were no God, they will easily be argued into its belief and persuasion. Nay, they cannot otherwise excuse and defend their evil practices, than by renouncing those principles which condemn such wicked courses. And indeed,
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whensoever we come into the company of profligate sinners; if malice, satyr, censoriousness, and the like, are not the subjects of their discourse; the ridiculing or denying God, Religion, and every thing that's sacred are their usual topicks. So that they who chuse, delight in, and frequent such company as this, can hardly escape having *their minds and consciences defiled; the whole head will soon be sick, and the whole heart faint, and they will become abominable, disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.*

Having consider'd in what respects the conversation of wicked men is allowable and necessary, and when and how it becomes unlawful, and sinful: I proceed now to propose some general arguments to dissuade us from ill company. And, First, This is what we find condemned by the precepts of our most holy religion, and repugnant to the practice
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of its most eminent professors. Thus God warns the *Israelites* from *making any covenant, or holding communion with the idolatrous nations*, lest they also apostatize from the true way of worship, *and follow a multitude to do evil*. The holy Psalmist dissuades us from the company of those, who purpose and endeavour *to overthrow our goings*, assuring us, that *with the perfect man we may be perfect, but with the froward we shall learn frowardness*. 'Tis the wise man's advice not to *yield our consent when sinners entice, not to cast in our lot amongst them, but to refrain our feet from their paths*, so that *in vain their nets may be spread when we perceive and shun their fatal delusions*.

And as we are thus warned in the Old Testament, so we are likewise admonished in the New *to beware of evil workers, not to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but to withdraw our selves from all*
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those who live and walk disorderly: For what communion hath light with darkness? what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? Hence the holiest and best of men have in all ages thought it no less their duty than interest to separate themselves from the congregations of the unrighteous, nay, to hide themselves from the gathering together of the forward, and from the insurrection of wicked doers. They have made it their earnest request and supplication to God to escape these nets and snares of the ungodly, not to be occupied with the workers of wickedness, lest they eat of such things as please them. We read that Moses declined the soft delicacies of a court, and the treasures and preferments of Egypt out of a true zeal to God, and for fear of being corrupted with those enchantments. David and other good men have cautiously avoided the paths and traps of the wicked,

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the overflowings of ungodliness have made them afraid, and tho' some with greater security and better grounds may be more adventurous than others, yet let every one that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

Secondly, The other argument I shall urge to dissuade us from ill company may be drawn from the dangerous and unhappy consequences hereof in respect to our souls, reputation, and lives, even in this world, and to both our souls and bodies to all eternity; whence we may reasonably conclude, and justly pronounce such company to be sinful, scandalous, and destructive of our present and future well-being.

That it endangers our souls, is beyond all contradiction very plain and manifest, in that it betrays and leads us into those temptations, which 'tis the true Christian's daily practice

etice as well as duty to pray against. Indeed, human nature is of itself very corrupt and depraved, it has an inclination and propensity to that which is evil, and therefore needs some resistance to invert its motion. Good education and society are those restraints and barriers which support the soul, and secure it from danger, which would otherwise lie very exposed and defenceless. Whereas nothing is a greater snare, more betrays men into, or confirms them in wickedness than ill examples, and ill company. Nay, whatever good designs we may have, 'tis neither prudent nor safe to trust our selves with numbers, and venture too far, *lest we also run with them into the same excess of riot.* Neither the *High Priest's hall*, nor the communication of his servants were a suitable place, or company for *a disciple of Christ*: His boasted resolution and constan-

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cy there failed him, which rather languished and *cooled*, than received fresh warmth and vigour from such a *fire*.

We know that *a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*, what we passionately love we are too apt to imitate, and therefore by frequenting bad company, and affecting their persons, we may soon become reconciled to their vices; and tho' upon our first entrance into their society, 'tis very possible we might have no evil or ungodly designs, yet 'tis very improbable that we should return as innocent as we came. Nay, this one consideration renders their company sinful, in that we must needs be accessary to their crimes by forbearing to reprove them. When the mysteries of our most holy Religion, and the very fundamental articles of Christianity are degraded by some, burlesqu'd upon by others, and disputed
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by most (which are no poetical fictions, nor fabulous dreams, but openly avowed in print, and too frequently argued and sported with in company.) Can any one who hath either courage or conscience with silence hear, or even with patience bear points of so sacred a nature, and such vast importance to be thus rudely handled? Shall not we, if present be the worse for not reproving them; and yet what is very melancholy to consider, will they be a whit better for our reproofs? will they not rather *despise all our counsels, and set at nought every thing we can possibly urge?*

If we have also any due regard to our credit and reputation in the world, we shall be very cautious with whom we frequently converse, and chuse as constant companions. For tho' we may not be so wicked as the rest of

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our society, yet we shall at least be thought so. 'Tis a rule amongst men, who generally judge by outward appearances, to distinguish the good or bad characters of persons by the company they frequent. And if we associate with those (let our pretence be what it will) that are notoriously infamous, we shall be sure to go *sharers in the shame and scandal*. Men are easily distinguished by the choice of their company, and tendency of their discourse; so that where these are depraved, we may even with charity suspect, and ought in prudence to avoid them, since we may as soon expect *grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles*, as commendable designs and honest practices from such. Both reason and decency oblige us to avoid the profane and immoral, to abate of our familiarities with, and forbear the company of those, whom we may perceive to depart

depart either from orthodoxy in faith, or purity in practice. Nay, 'tis the *Apostle's* advice to *note such persons*, and separate our selves from them *that they may be ashamed*. The bare mention of which so frequently *sounded in our ears*, may very justly reproach this licentious age wherein infidels and libertines, free-thinkers and free-livers, are not only not avoided nor abhorred, but too generally even applauded and caressed. How we who are Christians can admire their wit, compliment their characters, and shew a fondness for their company who are professed adulterers of our faith, and glory in being the authors of those monstrous opinions, which modest tongues and ears can scarce bear to repeat or hear, is too melancholy a reflection. 'Tis a very unpleasing work too narrowly to search into those unhappy wounds which religion has received from such pesti-

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lent tenets, and which all true Christians wish could be as easily healed, as they are justly lamented. Till the wisdom of this nation has found out an expedient to suppress such unchristian and unprecedented liberties, which in defiance of all sacred and civil laws, are daily taken in print, to distract us at home, and discredit us abroad; let us in our private capacities not only abhor their notions, but stigmatize their persons, and exclude them all serious and civilized society, that they themselves *may be ashamed, and that others also may see and fear, and do no more so presumptuously.* Such indeed as are *brethren in iniquity* may freely converse and unite to do mischief, *they may cast in their lots together, and have all one purse:* But 'tis too much countenancing irreligion, for religious men to seem intimate with such; nay, 'tis giving too much *occasion to those who seek all*

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occasions to disgrace our profession, and expose our characters.

I may add too, that the danger of being involved into the same calamities with the rest of our company, is, were there no other, a very sufficient reason to justify our caution. For God's judgments sometimes, as well as mercies, promiscuously fall on the righteous and the wicked. *Solomon's observation in his days was very just and remarkable, a companion of fools shall be destroyed.* And our own laws now in cases of burglary, theft, murder, and the like, take cognisance not only of the immediate actors, but their confederates too; nay, all that are apprehended with them incur the penalty. The time would fail me to produce the many instances of those recorded in scripture, who have more or less been the unhappy sufferers upon this occasion; as *Lot with the Sodomites, they that adhered to Korah, Dathan,*
and

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and Abiram, Jehosaphat with Ahab, Abazia, and the like. Nay our own daily observations may convince us of the truth of what the Psalmist asserts, There are they fallen all that work wickedness; I may add too, those that are companions of, and confederates with them.

But tho' such should escape all the punishments of this life, yet the torments they are doomed to in another world, are alone sufficient to vindicate God's justice, and to deter us from such dangerous and destructive fellowship. For, evil communications will not only betray us into temporal inconveniences, but expose us to intolerable and endless miseries.

When we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive the rewards, or suffer the punishments of our respective works; when profane scoffers and libertines shall see the righteous admitted into the

the kingdom of Heaven, and themselves thrust out; then shall they too late reflect, and cry out, we fools counted their lives madness, and their end to be without honour; ridiculed their faith as stupid credulity, mocked at their devotion as superstitious delusion, and reproached their conscientious perseverance in goodness, as obstinate simplicity. But now we behold them numbred among the children of God, and their lot to be among the saints; now in vain we envy, as before in contempt, we pity'd and insulted over them.

If then we are wise for our selves, have any regard to our characters, any concern or value for our souls and bodies, both here and hereafter, let us beware of ill company: If we desire not to *partake of their sins, and receive of their plagues*, let us hearken to the voice of reason and revelation, and *come out from amongst them.*

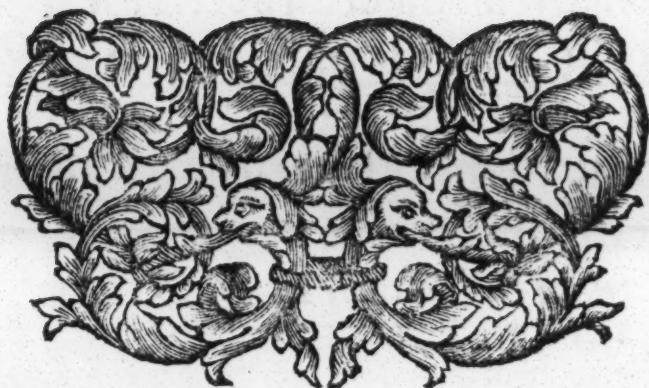
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If we have been hitherto confederate with them, let us now resolve, whilst we have both inclination and power, and before it be too late to *break those wicked bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us; let the time past suffice* to have wrought their deeds of darkness, and *works of iniquity*; let the time present be employed in *breaking off our sins* by a sincere repentance, and working our souls into a better frame and posture; and let the time to come demonstrate the happy improvements we have made, and that *we are such manner of persons as we ought to be in all holy conversation, and godliness*; continually imploring the divine grace to assist our endeavours, and to *hold up our goings that our footsteps slip not*; and beseeching Almighty God to look upon the hearty desires of his humble servants, and stretch forth the right hand of his Majesty to be our defence against
all

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all our enemies, more especially
those who endeavour to *corrupt our*
good manners, and assault and hurt
our souls, through Jesus Christ our
Lord. *Amen.*



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